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War Famine

and our

Food Supply

R. B. Marston

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**War, Famine**

**and our**

**Food Supply**







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# War, Famine

and our

# Food Supply

Robert Bright BY  
R. B. MARSTON

ILLUSTRATED

LONDON  
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON AND COMPANY  
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## INTRODUCTORY

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IN the following Introductory remarks I have given a bare outline of the suggestion—for it is nothing more—which I have endeavoured to formulate more fully in the succeeding chapters.

The *Standard* and other papers when noticing my article on “Corn Stores for War Time,” in the *Nineteenth Century* for February, 1896, said it was a result of the recent threats of war from America and Germany.

But it was not so. It was the result of living and moving about all my life among this enormous and densely-packed mass of human beings in London—nearly six millions\* of us within the Metropolitan and city police districts, all absolutely dependent on foreign food supplies. Those who say that it is absurd and preposterous on my part to talk of a precarious week’s supply of bread should

\* Over five millions of our fellow-subjects died through famine in India in 1877-78.

ask themselves what is to happen if London is unable to obtain food. Will the starving mill hands of Lancashire allow whatever food there may be stored at Liverpool to pass out of the county? Will other densely-populated places where food first arrives at our shores pass it on to London and other great inland towns?

The Bishop of Stepney said recently that, in *that district alone*, there were one hundred thousand skulking loafers who constituted a danger to London and a peril to the empire.

If our food supply from abroad is ever so seriously interfered with as to place bread beyond the reach of our millions of toilers, leavened with hundreds of thousands of "skulking loafers," it will be quite impossible for this country to carry on war—we must give in at any sacrifice in order to feed our masters.

What I want is to remove from America and Russia the power to starve us into submission by withholding from us our daily bread. Russia is all-powerful in the north of Europe—in addition to stopping her own people from sending corn to us, she would not allow any Baltic State to do so either. The United States is all-powerful in North

America. Canada only sends a little more than one million quarters of corn a year in peace time, how could she do even that when fighting for her very existence with her great neighbour?

Thus we see that for over seventeen out of the twenty-five million quarters of wheat forming our total import in a year, we are absolutely dependent on North America and Russia.

It must be presumed that Argentina, India, Australia, Uruguay, Chili, Roumania, Turkey, Persia, etc., which between them send us about seven or eight million quarters, send us practically all they have to spare of each harvest. I mean that it is not likely that any of those countries keep enormous stores of corn on hand in addition to their regular annual export. No, we shall be very fortunate if we can get the amount we generally get from them safely through our enemies' commerce-destroyers in war time, considering the enormous distances they are away.

It will be seen I have proposed only to have a reserve of wheat to make bread with for our people. I have not dared to suggest a reserve of other corn, such as barley, maize, rye, etc.,

for feeding our live stock, although our imports of other corn are nearly as large as those of wheat—and also come chiefly from America and Russia.

The countries named practically exhaust the list of exporting corn-producing countries.

The other great Powers of Europe are either only producing just enough corn for their own needs, or are actually importing it like ourselves.

Of course we should not be in such danger if we could elsewhere get our bread supply, but we can *not*, turn where we will. Offer what price we may, nowhere on the face of the globe could be found the enormous supply of corn which America and Russia alone have it in their power at any moment to deprive us of.

And then would come the pity and the madness of it! What could our fleet do against Russia and the United States? If it were ten times stronger than it is it could only blockade the American ports for a time, and make some of their defenceless towns pay money instead of bombarding them or threatening to do so; it could only shut up the Russian fleet in its own fortified harbours.

It could inflict no such damage on either country as would compel them to sue for peace, as long as they knew that want and discontent, and perhaps famine and rebellion, were fighting in our midst for them.

But, if they knew that we had a year's bread supply in the country, that it would serve us until our farmers and husbandmen and nursery gardeners *had time* to sow and grow corn and grain of all kinds, potatoes, and other root crops of all kinds, and live stock of all kinds, and there can be no doubt that the tremendous energy of our people, and the latent resources of our naturally fertile land, would produce the food we required, in addition to that neutrals and our Colonies and Dependencies could supply us with—once past those six or twelve months of danger from famine, months during which we should have added enormously to our war fleet, and the empire would be in an unassailable position, self-fed as well as self-armed—we should have turned the tables on our enemies; without a market for their corn their farmers would be ruined, and would fight for peace.

In whatever light we look at it, there

can be no question as to not merely the advisability, but the necessity for removing our last and most vital line of defence—our bread supply—from the control of America and Russia to our own absolute control.

1. Because £30,000,000 of corn safely stored all over these islands would, in a time of scarcity, such as we experienced in 1800 and 1801 and at other times, be worth in mere money value £150,000,000 in the Bank of England, at the price corn rose to in those years. In a time of dangerous famine threatening it would be impossible to estimate its value in gold; you would have to throw into the scales the lives of millions, perhaps the life of the empire itself.

2. Because it would relieve our sailors and soldiers of the terrible feeling that not all their utmost devotion and sacrifice could make the world produce two corn harvests for us in one year.

3. Because it would remove the greatest, if not the only, factor on which other powers rely when thinking about war with us, viz. famine.

There are many other most vital reasons; but surely these are enough.



Then what are the difficulties in the way?

The first and greatest difficulty is, that our people do not realize the position into which we have drifted through all these long years of peace since Nelson and Wellington fought for us.

How can it realize the position when the Commander-in-Chief of our army endeavours to lull us to sleep again by telling our naval officers that he knows more about their business than they do; that our coasts cannot be blockaded (no one ever dreamed that they could), and that if they were, enterprising Yankees, with whom we were at war, would be allowed by their Government to run through our blockade of their ports with corn for us?

Let me ask my reader if he, or she, knows what our foreign bread supply, obtained chiefly from America and Russia, means?

Suppose the Government said to every person in the United Kingdom, "We will give each of you enough wheat to make bread with for a year if you will carry it home from the nearest railway station," it would be impossible

to do it—*i.e.* in one journey. If the whole forty millions of us were able-bodied men we should each have to carry nearly three hundredweight of this foreign corn.

It would be a good thing if we were compelled to do it for once, as we should then realize that we are absolutely dependent for our daily bread on nations which may at any moment declare war with us. It is idle folly to hope that the establishment of an International Court of Arbitration between this country and America will make war impossible; it may make it less possible, but that is all. The greatest factor for peace is an invincible fleet, and such a reserve of food in the country as will give us time to sow and grow all the food we require.

People say, "But think of the cost of keeping such an enormous quantity of corn." Well, but think that the whole fate of this country lies in our having or not having this enormous food supply.

I do not pretend to be an expert in naval or military matters, or in the corn business, but it requires no special knowledge to see that some measure should be taken adequate

to prevent the possibility of our country being exposed to the horrors of famine.

I earnestly hope that all who can exert any influence on Parliament will endeavour to obtain the appointment of a thoroughly representative and competent Commission to consider the whole question of our dependence on foreign countries for our daily bread, and the forming of such a reserve of wheat as will give us time to grow food at home in case of necessity.

1. It should be an adequate reserve.

2. It should be a reserve which would never deteriorate.

3. It should be a reserve entirely under Government control, and *safe*, and so managed as to be incapable of affecting the corn-market.

I may of course be wrong, but I think the scheme I proposed in the *Nineteenth Century*, and in the columns of the *Standard* and *Daily News* early last year, and have elaborated in this volume, is one which would give us a reserve of wheat which would be adequate, never deteriorate, be safe, and during peace time never have the slightest influence on the corn-market.

This is what I propose. Our present annual import of foreign wheat is roughly about twenty-five million quarters. I propose that our Government should buy five million quarters of wheat a year for five years, by placing advance orders through its agents abroad in all the corn-markets of the world, giving the preference as far as possible to our own colonies. It has been said that this would upset prices enormously. I do not think it would if properly done, but the end in view is one which would justify even a great rise in price of corn during the time we were forming our reserve. It seems to me it would work in this way, as one instance. Our Government agents in Canada would advertise for so many thousand quarters of wheat, to be delivered within so many months at a fixed price, it being clearly stated that the wheat so ordered was for the purpose of forming a reserve, and would *never be for sale* in peace time. The farmers accepting such an order would know that they would have to produce it *in addition* to their ordinary annual supply for export to this country, because the supply ordered by the Government

would be extra, and in no way compete with the ordinary current supply. For all practical purposes it would not exist as an article of market value in normal times. Business men all the world over are always glad to accept at a remunerative price a fixed order for goods which they know will not, and cannot, compete in any way with their ordinary business demands.

With such a customer as John Bull himself, as represented by his Government, there can be no doubt that the various corn-producing countries of the world would jump at the chance of selling to him as much wheat as he cares to take at practically his own price, knowing, as of course they would do, that if he did not get it in one market he would in another, that if he could not buy it abroad he would grow it at home.

The ideal thing, of course, would be to grow our reserve at home, and I think it may be found possible to grow at any rate a large portion of it at home. English wheat does not get enough sun as a rule to insure its keeping well, but I am told by experts in the corn trade that, if properly treated and mixed

with a certain proportion of foreign corn, it will keep good for a year, and my scheme, as I have repeatedly said, provides for renewing every grain of our reserve of twenty-five million quarters every year.

I have seen for many years past with deep regret the tremendous decrease of corn growing in our country. I should welcome any scheme which made it worth the while of our farmers to put more land under the plough. I wish our pale and bloodless town dwellers knew as I do that no bread is so sweet, so sustaining, and lasts good so long as that made from good wheat grown in these islands. But it is hopeless to attempt to convert generations which have grown up on foreign bread. They want their bread, like their collars, all starch. To have an adequate reserve of wheat we should have, I think, a year's supply, *i.e.* the time between two harvests.

I propose, then, that our Government should take under its control the entire year's import of foreign wheat, just as it does that of tobacco and wine. Only by this means would it be possible to keep our reserve of

wheat good, and not merely good for a year or two, but for ever.

By Act of Parliament, all wheat or flour coming to our shores should be handed over to our Customs Officers. By Act of Parliament the owner of the wheat should be guaranteed its full value. Supposing, as an instance, I buy a thousand pounds' worth of new wheat in America and bring it to Liverpool, the Government authorities there should have the power to pass it on to me, *or*, give me its exact market equivalent in wheat one year old. I, as individual, suffer no loss whatever in either case, and the State gains by being able to replace its year-old wheat, if it is necessary to do so, by an equivalent of new wheat. The State does not, and must not, make a profit by the exchange; its sole object is to keep the year's reserve always perfectly good. It seems to me that the only way to keep the reserve at a proper level is to make it equal to the annual import. If we import five million quarters less one year than another, we should only have to exchange so much less.

In this way alone, I contend, could we

establish an adequate reserve, and one which by constant change will be always fresh.

People tell me that I seem to have quite overlooked the fact that there are different varieties and qualities of wheat in our annual import, and that this would make my system of enforced exchange very difficult to carry out. I cannot see that there would be any difficulty, because each quality has its market value. If an importer of new Russian wheat received from the Government a quantity of Russian wheat one year old of the same market value he could not complain.

In a time of famine threatening—and this might quite possibly occur through failure of foreign wheat crops as well as through war—we should thus have twelve months' supply of wheat to fall back on, it would be sold to our corn-merchants under strict conditions as to its resale, so that only a fair profit would be allowed, and the price of the loaf made from it should be fixed by law. In this way we should have time to grow corn and other food at home in such quantities as to make us independent of foreign countries in a great measure.



As such a reserve of wheat would be for the benefit of the whole empire indirectly, I think it is probable that our Colonies and India would be quite willing to contribute in some way towards the formation of the reserve by giving facilities for growing it specially for us, if it was found impossible to do it at home.

The total value of our imported food supply is estimated at about £150,000,000 a year. Suppose we make our wheat supply for one year absolutely safe, as I propose, it still leaves one hundred and twenty million pounds' worth of other food—in addition to over two hundred and fifty million pounds' worth of other imports, and 285 million pounds' worth of exports—for our war fleet to protect, as well as protecting our shores and colonies and fighting pitched battles.

A certain proportion of these other food supplies (even if wheat and other corn was stopped by Russia and America) would unquestionably reach us—what proportion no man can say, but it must be remembered that these other food supplies are more in the way of luxuries, such as cocoa, coffee,

tea, sugar, fruit, wine, etc., than actual necessities, such as bread and water. Water we already store up in reservoirs near all our towns, of bread we have next to no reserve at all. Admitting for a moment that the *Standard* is correct in saying that with what we grow at home (and we grow less every year), with what foreign wheat we have in store, or in ships on the way here, we have "rarely less than three months' supply," it must be remembered that this calculation is for peace time, and is instantly upset if you apply the war-time test to it.

A war which absolutely stopped our stupendous supplies of corn from Russia and America is perfectly possible, and the day it was declared, the price of corn would rise enormously, and that of every other article of food would rise with it. In consequence of the stoppage of raw materials for our manufacturers, hundreds of thousands of our working men and women would be thrown out of employment.

Some of my critics have referred to my statement that we are actually living on little more than a week's supply of bread as

“preposterous.” Do they imagine that what has always happened before when we had a great naval war will not happen again, viz. that while consols and stocks of all kinds are going down, the price of corn and food generally will not go up by leaps and bounds? Well, let them take up their *Whitaker’s Almanack* and look up “Wheat” in the Index, and see what happened to wheat in our great naval wars of the end of the last and beginning of this century.

From 43s. the quarter in 1792 it gradually rose to 113s. 10d. in 1800, and 119s. 6d. in 1801, falling again gradually to 62s. in 1804, but only to rise again to £6 6s. 6d. per quarter in 1812, when we were fighting America as well as Europe. The average of the first two years of this century was 116s. 8d. per quarter. This means that £1 in those years would only buy about twenty such loaves as we now regularly get one hundred of for the same money. But the £1 sterling one hundred years ago was worth much more than it is to-day—how much more I do not know; we in those times grew nearly all our corn at home instead of getting it nearly all from

abroad, and had only twelve or fourteen instead of forty millions to feed.

Is it, then, so "preposterous" to say, as I do, that our three months' supply of corn (if we ever have so much) for peace time, will in a few days in war time practically cease to exist for our toilers? Why, if by some miracle it alone kept its normal price while meat and everything else was bounding up, there would be such an enormous extra demand for it that it would be consumed in a few days. Millions who now are able to buy a little meat, cheese, fish, etc., as well as bread, would have to cut off the luxuries and eat more bread.

If the power of this country is ever broken or crippled, it will only be, in my opinion, because our enemies have succeeded in starving us, and their only chance of doing that would be taken away by our having a year's reserve of wheat always in store. At Malta, as will be described presently, we keep wheat in immense silos, sufficient in quantity to last for two or three years, and it keeps good that time; but I am sure my system of exchanging it annually would be the safest plan, and is the only one which overcomes the tremendously

important objection to corn stores, viz. interference with the corn-market.

Why, as I have ventured to ask in a chapter of this book, is not such a plan as this in action in those provinces of India where famine occurs every now and then ?

As regards the cost, we should have to pay the interest on the investment in the store of wheat. I think it is not unreasonable to suppose that by ordering twelve months ahead in the different corn-growing countries, we could purchase a year's supply for about twenty-five millions sterling, not much less than the average market price *in this country* for the whole of 1894. I should suggest the formation of a Sinking Fund, or the issue of Imperial Corn Bonds, bearing interest at three per cent. The interest on the Bonds would amount to about £750,000 per annum, and when spread over the whole of the tax-paying inhabitants of these islands would be absolutely unfelt. The fortified granaries should be built by each town or district according to its requirements, and paid for by a loan extending over some years.

The cost of working the granaries would

be more than covered by the 3s. per quarter now made by the private corn-merchant for storing wheat for one year and cleaning it. As the Government would do this work, they would make the charge and either take over or employ the staff and machinery now engaged for that work for the purpose. I am told by a leading authority in the corn trade that 3s. per quarter per year covers all charges for cleaning wheat and keeping it for one year including interest, and that wheat so kept and cleaned is improved at least 3s. in value by being so kept.

In my attempt to defend my scheme against the various attacks that have been made upon it by my friendly critics, it may be that I have laid myself open to the charge of redundancy or repetition. My excuse must be that I have thought nothing of the gracefulness of style. I have only thought of rendering my scheme as clear and as perfect as I can, and to this end it has seemed to me that, in reply to the criticisms I have quoted, repetition was sometimes necessary and unavoidable.

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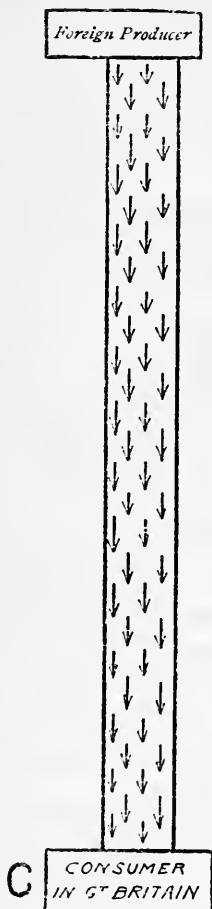


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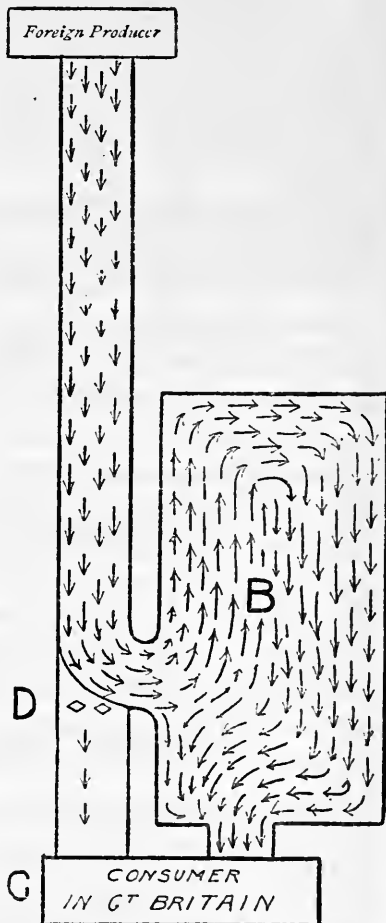
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## OUR IMPORTED WHEAT STREAM.

No. 1. A



No. 2. A



In No. 1 of these diagrams I have attempted to show by the streams of arrows how our imported wheat at present comes into the country, i.e. direct from the Foreign Producer to the British Consumer. If the supply was cut off at A in No. 1 diagram we should have only the corn in the country, and that on its way over sea, to fall back on, not three months' supply, even in peace time, and often far less.

In No. 2 diagram I have supposed we have, as I suggest, formed a reserve B equal to a year's import, and in order to keep it always good, pass our current import through it at the Government Department D. The three arrows below D represent the inferior kinds of wheat imported which would be passed on to the consumer. For details see chapter "How to form and maintain a Reserve of Wheat equal to One Year's Import of it."—R. B. M.

# WAR, FAMINE, AND OUR FOOD SUPPLY

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## CHAPTER I.

### OUR POSITION IN 1800 AND NOW.

IN comparing the high prices of bread mentioned in the following extracts from the history of the period with present day possible prices in war time, we must bear in mind the ominous fact that a shilling at the beginning of this century had far more purchasing power than it has to-day.

One object of this little book is to show the gradual, almost unnoticed, but tremendous change in our position which has taken place since the beginning of this century. Then we numbered some twelve or fourteen millions, and we grew nearly all the corn we required at home; now we number nearly forty

millions, and we buy by far the greater part of our corn and *other food* from other nations thousands of miles from our shores.

A glance at the coloured diagram opposite the title page will, I think, give a clear idea of the extent on which we rely on foreign countries for *wheat alone*.

But the chief object in view is to show the possibility of immeasurable disaster to our nation which our present position unquestionably involves us in, and to suggest a possible and, as I hope to prove, a practical remedy.

#### ON THE BRINK OF FAMINE.

Knight, in his "History of England," says—

"The people of these islands were, throughout the year 1800, and partly in 1801, on the brink of famine. . . .

"Deficient harvests raised the price of wheat to one hundred and thirty-four shillings a quarter in 1800, and to one hundred and fifty-six shillings a quarter in the spring of 1801. The danger had become imminent, at the time when the conclusion of a peace offered by France might have opened our ports to importations which would have fed that large body of the

artisan class that were not fed, without stint, by the operation of a bread scale.

“In February, 1800, palliatives were resorted to. The sale of bread which had not been baked twenty-four hours was prohibited. The people were exhorted to economy by proclamation. Brown bread was to be eaten instead of white. Noble lords resolved to discourage the use of pastry in their families. At the end of November the prospect became more alarming. Importation was encouraged by excessive bounties. GREAT BRITAIN DID NOT GROW ENOUGH CORN, EVEN IN AVERAGE YEARS, FOR THE SUBSISTENCE OF THE PEOPLE. . . .

“The Government, when the evil reached its culminating point at the end of 1800, and at the beginning of 1801, was powerless, except to bring in a Brown Bread Bill. They did something more. They again suspended the Habeas Corpus Act, FOR THE PEOPLE WERE RIOTING. Pitt clearly saw the social danger to which these riots would lead. . . .

“The author of this history has a distinct recollection of his alarm, when, a child of nine years old, he saw a mob parading the streets of Windsor, breaking the windows of the bakers, and going forth in a body with the intention of burning a neighbouring mill. . . .

“In the spring of 1801 the high prices of bread reached their maximum. On the 5th of March the price of the quartern loaf was one shilling and tenpence halfpenny.

“A GOOD HARVEST CAME TO EASE THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE, and in the middle of October the price of the quartern loaf had fallen to elevenpence farthing.

“In 1801 the poor rates had risen to a sum exceeding four millions sterling, with a population of nine millions. The provision for the poor had doubled since 1783.”

Charles Knight's personal recollection of the riots at Windsor was the common experience of our forefathers throughout all the land in those opening years of this century. And yet, during this period of actual want and threatening famine,

#### IN 1801 WHAT WAS OUR NAVAL POSITION?

“AT THIS TIME (1801) THE BRITISH NAVY WAS SUPERIOR TO THE COMBINED FORCES OF ALL EUROPE.”  
—Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire*.

#### WHAT WAS OUR NAVAL POSITION IN 1889?

Captain Mahan said—

“At the present time (1889) FRANCE AND ENGLAND are the two powers that have the largest military navies; and it is so far an open question which of the two is the more

powerful, that they MAY BE REGARDED AS PRACTICALLY OF EQUAL STRENGTH IN MATERIAL FOR A SEA WAR."

It is well for us as a nation that these words of a, at that time, comparatively unknown American naval officer, were burnt into our minds.

If we have, since they were written, again acknowledged that our sole strength as a nation lies in our sea power, it is in a very great measure thanks to his warnings.

As the *Times* said, "Captain Mahan's teachings are invested with an immense and capital interest for ourselves."

We must, however, not lose sight of the fact that Captain Mahan's teachings were not directly intended for us, they were addressed by him as President of the United States Naval War College, to his own countrymen, and the lesson which has been taken to heart from them, has not been taken by us only, but by every other great power. His "teachings" have had results in France, Germany, Russia, Italy, and the United States, which, combined, measured in battle-ships, exceed the additions we have made to

our own fleet since he told us it was equal to that of France.

Inasmuch as we destroyed the once formidable sea power of Holland, the striking analogy between her former position and our present position gives peculiar force to this further lesson from the greatest of naval historians and critics.

#### HOLLAND'S FORMER POSITION AND OURS NOW.

“In the height of her greatness, when she was one of the chief factors in European politics, a competent native authority estimated that the soil of Holland could not support more than one eighth of her inhabitants. . . .

“With large deductions, owing to differences of conditions which need not here be spoken of, the case of Holland *then*, *has strong points of resemblance to that of Great Britain now*; and they are true prophets, though they seem to be having small honour in their own country, who warn her that the continuance of her prosperity at home depends primarily upon maintaining her power abroad. Men may be discontented at the lack of political privilege; they will be yet more uneasy IF THEY COME TO LACK BREAD.”—Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power upon History*.

Having in common with so many of my



countrymen of all classes and all parties been impressed by and convinced of the absolute truth of Captain Mahan's teachings, and having lived among our toiling millions in London for more than forty years, I have for many years past often asked myself the question, "What will happen if from any cause our foreign food supply is stopped?" I have also asked myself, "What right have I to attempt to answer such a question?"

It must not be imagined that I claim any originality on my part in the suggestion that we should provide corn stores for war time.

The Earl of Winchilsea, editor of the *Cable*, the official organ of the New Agricultural Party, says in the issue of that journal for February 8th, '96, "'Are we Prepared?' This is the sensible question which Mr. R. B. Marston sets himself to answer in the current issue of the *Nineteenth Century*. Readers of the *Cable* will hardly require to be reminded that the subject is one which we urged on the public attention two years ago."

What I think I may claim is that I have shown how the difficulties which have hitherto made any suggestion of corn-storage impracticable can be overcome.

These difficulties are—

- (1) That although corn, if properly kept, will keep good for years, it must deteriorate and decay in time.
- (2) That to establish such a reserve of corn would cause grave disorganization of the corn trade and market.

Judging from the many letters I have received from corn merchants and others, and the criticism, favourable and unfavourable, to which my article in the *Nineteenth Century* (Feb. 1896) has been subjected by newspapers in all parts of the country, these are the two great objections made to the simple proposal to store corn at all.

It may well be asked, with justice, what right have I, an unknown unit, one of three hundred and fifty millions of the subjects of Queen Victoria, to venture to preach to my fellow-countrymen on any subject, least of all on one so momentous as this?

I can only answer, I am an Englishman, with some knowledge of my country's glorious past and present, with full hope and confidence in her more glorious future—with full hope and confidence on all but one point.

I am old enough to remember the illuminations and rejoicings at the end of our last war with Russia; to remember the sigh and sob of the nation when our hold on India was strained almost to the breaking point; to still have printed on my memory the contents bills of our daily press announcing Gettysburg, the siege and fall of Vicksburg (when bean-meal was made into bread, and the garrison was too famished to cut its way out), Lee's surrender, and the practical destruction of all the wooden battleships in the world by one small ironclad. I was at school in Prussia when the German empire was still a dream of "Der Alte Barbarossa, der Kaiser Friederich," and I have seen the dream realized. I gave cigars to the Prussian soldiers travelling in cattle-trucks to Sadowa and begged in exchange a bullet of the then new needle gun which was to effect another revolution in warfare. Gravelotte and the siege of Metz, Sedan and the fall of Paris, reduced by famine—does it seem a quarter of a century since the world rang with their echoes? Then Plevna—I knew that gallant American, MacGahan, the friend of Skobelev. Why did Plevna fall?

Read MacGahan's letters to the *Daily News* in 1877. He met Skobelev after that terrific fight in which, after carrying the double redoubt in the bend of the Loftcha road close to Plevna with a loss of three thousand men, he was driven out of it by the Turks. MacGahan says—

“He was in a fearful state of excitement and fury. His uniform was covered with mud and filth, his sword broken, his cross of St. George twisted around on his shoulder, his face black with powder and smoke, his eyes haggard and bloodshot, and his voice quite gone. I never before saw such a picture of battle as he presented.”

We may believe, with good grounds, that in our navy and army we have men who will prove equal to that prince of warriors, the Russian Skobelev; but it was not to him and those like him that Plevna fell.

### WHY PLEVNA FELL.

“The capture by assault having been given up, the Russians sat down to invoke the aid of that engine, more powerful than all their batteries, the engine of starvation. Osman Pasha was to be starved into surrender.”

What would it have availed Russia that she had spent one hundred and twenty millions sterling, and lost one hundred thousand of her best blood, if the spectre of famine had not fought on her side ?

“With the fall of Plevna, and the surrender of its garrison of forty thousand men, the Turkish opposition practically ceased.”

We of the British Empire have been onlookers only at great wars since—well, almost since Nelson fought for us—and Waterloo, which, as Captain Mahan tells us, in a measure Nelson won also ; for “without Trafalgar there could have been no Waterloo.” Captain Mahan means, of course, that if our sea power had not driven the French from every sea by victory after victory, Wellington’s glorious advance through Spain and his final triumph with Blücher at Waterloo would have been impossible. Napoleon, free to go where he pleased over all Europe, was yet like a caged lion in the meshes of the British fleet. And was it not famine which drove even him from Russia ?

I was talking some years ago to a patriotic

young Frenchman about the position of Belgium and Holland. I said it seemed to me that they were between the devil and the deep blue sea, or rather between two devils—France and Germany. I asked him what he thought was the value of their frontiers measured by French and German standards.

“Ah!” he said, “I look forward to the time when there will be no frontiers.”

“No frontiers!” I said. “What do you mean?”

“Yes—no frontiers—all will be France!”

I said, “It has been so, it may be so again; but your coast line must ever be our frontier.”

I said just now that we English—British and Irish I should say—had been onlookers at great wars almost since Nelson and Wellington’s time. I am not unmindful of the splendid deeds of our soldiers and sailors all the world over since then, but I have in view the fact that we have during nearly all this century been reaping the fruits of the blows struck for England and our Empire by our forefathers in the great wars when we were face to face with the world in arms and beat it.

Surely a glorious inheritance is that possessed by the subjects of Queen Victoria to-day. In freedom, religion, science, war, art, commerce, law, literature, in all that makes life on this earth of value, we have our full share. Is it not our duty to pass on to those who shall come after us this harvest of a thousand years of freedom augmented and unshaken?

The *Standard* of February 20, 1896, published the following extract from an article on Mr. Alfred Austin by Herr Max Nordau, in which he ridicules the notion, so dear to continental writers, that the British are a nation of shopkeepers:—

“Shopkeepers, indeed!” he exclaims. “Those who fought at Hastings like giants and Titans, who subdued two continents, are ruling two hundred million Asiatics by the will and nerve of a couple of thousand of their race, who brought to their knees such men as Napoleon I. and Nicholas I., and who still have their Jamesons to demonstrate that their old strength of will and power of ruling over others have not yet died out! If these are the characteristics of shopkeepers, what is the essential difference between shopkeepers and the heroes of the Greek

Myth?" "The ruling classes of England," he proceeds, "are the most powerful race of masters the world has seen since the Republic of Rome and the early Roman Empire, and Alfred Austin is one of that stock. To please an Englishman one must be strong and daring. The English are a bluff race, incomparable friends and terrible enemies, rather proud of being more feared than loved."

Will this tribute from a foreigner (not usually credited with optimism of any kind), to the genius of our race be true of us in the centuries to come? Unquestionably, "if England to herself is true," and if we realize the fact that since that great "If" was written by our greatest Englishman—since our last great sea war especially—an entire and tremendous change, unnoticed, or at least unprovided for, has taken place in the conditions under which we in this country exist.

The foundation of all our strength, the very spring from which we draw our life, without which armies and navies and riches are useless, has been removed from these islands.

Instead of being surrounded and protected



by our sea power, this fount of national life now lies beyond our own control.

Between the prayer—

“Give us this day our daily bread,”

and its realization, there was formerly nothing but God and nature, and the toil of our husbandmen. Now—Russia and America intervene.

It would be blind folly, in the light of recent events, to think that America will never again declare war with us. It is little more than twelve months since there went up throughout the length and breadth of America such a passionate cry for war with us, in which they hoped with good grounds that Russia\* would join them, as astounded the world—but just recovering from the German

\* “Russia on more than one occasion offered the United States assistance, and always when the relations between the United States and Britain were in danger of rupture. The great friendship of Russia has been accepted by the people of the United States as being purely disinterested. Secretaries of state, on the other hand, have understood it was not so much friendship for the United States as enmity for England.”—Washington correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*.

threat and our reply. To say that there was no real danger of a war is a mockery to all who watched the outburst in America. If our reply had equalled our provocation we should now be in the death struggle with our kinsmen. Arbitration treaties can no more always prevent war than a safety-valve can always prevent an explosion.\*

The late presidential election campaign in America ought ever to be a lesson to other nations that there are forces at work there which, even when directed against their own national institutions, have only been quelled, not destroyed, by the greatest political effort, in peace time, of any country, or time.

Since our nation attaches, and justly, so much import to the words of Captain Mahan, I feel I shall not betray his confidence by saying what he said to me in reply to a letter I wrote to him when war was still "in the air," asking if he thought it possible; he replied that, terrible as the fact was, he could not hide from himself the conviction of its possibility. And no one who watched the

\* (See "Arbitration from a Colonial Point of View" in the Appendix.)

outburst of war fever, expressed and excited rather than controlled by the majority of the American papers,\* can doubt what the result

\* Here is further and unquestionable evidence as to the war feeling in the United States at the beginning of 1896. It is from the *New York Nation*, the most fearless, honest, and outspoken paper in America:—

“Our State Department might safely and ought always to illustrate to the world the majesty of moderation, the dignity of good manners. The great difficulty in the way of such a consummation is the press, which with few exceptions is apt to call for violent language in terms which shake the nerves of secretaries of state. Worse than this, it does its best to prevent the settlement of any international dispute on terms which will not hurt the foreigner’s self-respect by always representing, when he meets us halfway, that it was our “vigour”—that is, our insolence, abusiveness, and brutality—that brought him to terms. It is at this devil’s work at this moment, by proclaiming that it was Mr. Cleveland’s coarse threat which has “brought England to her knees,” that it is our swagger which has drawn forth the pacific and friendly language of both the Ministry and Opposition in England, and the civil treatment accorded to our Commission; that, in short, in international affairs the ruffianly way is the more excellent way. *It is impossible, when one reads this stuff, to avoid the conclusion that the widespread desire for war, the existence of which there is no denying—war with somebody, but especially with England—is largely newspaper work; and we know of nothing which reflects or has reflected more discredit on our civilization—not slavery, not lynching, not corruption, not lawlessness. We do not believe there is anything which has during the last century done so much to discourage the believers in human progress as the*

would have been if our people and press had replied in the fashion we did to Germany. We were calm, because the reason for going to war was so ridiculously inadequate in our view—and, as it proved, in that of the Americans; but not until we gave them time to think twice about it. But the very fact that we were so near war for so inadequate a reason, should warn us that some more burning question may as suddenly arise on which *neither side* will listen to reason.

And if war between this country and America is, to say the very least, not impossible, no one will deny that it is quite possible between us and our European competitors for power. We have been in very recent years on the brink of war. With Russia over the Pendejrh affair, again when we sent the fleet to Besika Bay and took Cyprus, with France over Siam, and with Germany over Dr. Jameson's Raid.

Does Russia forget the treaty of San Stefano, when, by threat of war, we forced her

revelation that "Time's noblest offspring" was as full of desire to kill and wreck, for the fun of the thing, as the savage races on the site of whose corn-patches and torture-stakes we are erecting churches and colleges."

to relinquish the best fruits of her victories over the Turk? No more than France forgets her lost Rhine provinces, or our occupation of Egypt.

We must not hope for alliances with us, nor need we fear alliances against us, if only we make our fleet *adequate to our requirements*, and can be assured of *sufficient time* to draw on our inexhaustible resources for repairing and renewing it after the losses sustained in battle.

As Captain Mahan points out, so evenly balanced are the fleets which would be opposed to us, and ours, that the ultimate victory would rest with the power which could most rapidly and strongly repair after the first shock of battle.

It has been prophesied by some writers that our next great naval war will be a short one—nothing but the event itself can prove the truth of that. Those who think so must imagine that we shall very quickly beat a possible combination of fleets against us, or—be beaten.

We must remember that it will be a war not local, like that between China and Japan, and fought between unequal and small sea

powers ; it will be a world-wide war, between the greatest of naval powers—and our history tells us that such wars have not been short ones.

It is often said that steam has revolutionized the art of war ; if it has, it has not done so only to our advantage.

Notwithstanding the celerity with which Germany's railways poured troops into France, it took her ten months to beat France, and it took Russia longer to subdue Turkey, and in both cases it was not want of men, or pluck, or war material, which forced the final surrender—it was want of food.

The collapse of Austria in the seven weeks' war, was due to the fact that Prussia had quietly prepared for the war, and armed her soldiers with a rifle which gave them an immense advantage ; the Austrians were taken by surprise.

It will be to the eternal disgrace of our naval and military intelligence departments if we find on going to war that our opponents have, unknown to us, provided themselves with some such revolutionizing element of warfare as the ironclad and the needle-gun proved to be. M. Lockroy, the French

Minister of Marine, hints in his recent book on the French navy that we have got some fearful shell up our sleeve only waiting for the opportunity to confound our neighbours.

Referring to the fact that we do not seem to think much of *sous-marins* (*i.e.* submarine torpedo vessels) a French Naval Officer wrote the other day as follows :—

“ En outre, nos voisins ont affecté une somme d'environ cent millions, à la construction d'un type nouveau : le destroyer. A l'apparition des torpilleurs, l'Amirauté avait affecté de n'attacher aucune importance à ce genre de bateaux, de même qu'elle affecte aujourd'hui de considérer les sous-marins comme un facteur négligeable des guerres maritimes futures. Elle proclame aujourd'hui que le torpilleur est extrêmement dangereux, puisqu'elle consacre à sa destruction, une somme aussi considérable. Nous n'avons donc pas à prendre exemple sur elle, en matière de sous-marins. Il importe au contraire de réaliser au plus tôt, un type de sous-marin pouvant aller, en plein jour, lancer une torpille au bâtiment ennemi qui viendra insulter nos ports de guerre ou nos ports de commerce. Le problème est à très peu de chose près résolu, en Italie, en Allemagne, aux Etats-Unis et en France. Avec le torpilleur agissant la nuit et le sous-marin opérant de jour, les blocus seront intenable. Il faut donc nous hâter de réfectionner notre flottille de torpilleurs et de pousser activement la construction d'une flottille de sous-marins.”

## CHAPTER II.

THE "NINETEENTH CENTURY" ARTICLE ON  
"CORN STORES FOR WAR TIME."

MIGHT it not be possible for famine to force us to surrender? and, if so, is it possible to provide against even the chance of so tremendous a catastrophe?

It was this question that led me to ask Mr. James Knowles, the editor of the *Nineteenth Century*, if he would care to consider a short paper on the subject. Mr. Knowles asked me to call on him, and not only said he would gladly publish my paper, but gave me also most valuable suggestions. He said that there could be no doubt about the importance of the question, and that a recent event\* had emphasized its importance; he went on to say that I should not only ask the question but attempt to answer it. He

\* The Emperor of Germany's telegram.



also suggested that I should get an opinion on my paper from some recognized authorities. I mentioned one or two, with whose names he was perfectly satisfied, and I sent them proofs of the paper. After our conversation, and before the article appeared, we were threatened with war by the United States.

I must express my gratitude to Mr. Knowles not only for publishing my article, but also for relaxing his rule, and giving me permission to republish it here, "on account of the importance of the subject."

At Mr. Knowles's suggestion, I sent my paper, in proof, to one of our greatest and most trusted generals. He returned it to me with a letter, now before me, from which I make these extracts:—

"DEAR SIR,

"I received your article, in proof, as I was leaving the War Office.

"I agree substantially with your propositions; but is it wise to state them?

"I understand that in 1893 we grew eight million quarters of wheat; in 1894, six millions.

"If America fights us alone, Russia will feed us; if Russia fights us, America and Argentina will feed us.

"If America and Russia fight us, we may starve!

"I understand we have four months' wheat in the United Kingdom. You will remember Lord Winchilsea brought forward a modification of your idea last year. I believe it is feasible. We have no storage, but could build in central stations (not on sea-board) storage for sixteen million quarters, and sell so as to turn over once a year. It would work out like selling government bonds, and need not upset markets; but in my view your article is rather one for Mr. Balfour's reading rather than for Mr. Knowles's clients.\* I do not wish to be quoted publicly.

"Yours truly,  
"\_\_\_\_\_.

"P.S.—The conditions appear to me to be—

"1. Facility of collection.

"2. Of distribution.

"3. Of security."

I also sent a proof to another of our greatest men—one who knows from experience what famine really means, if ever man did—viz. Mr. Henry M. Stanley, M.P. Mr. Stanley replied—

\* Acting on General —'s suggestion I sent a copy to Mr. Balfour; he courteously acknowledged its receipt, and said he should read it with interest.

"DEAR MR. MARSTON,

"I have read with care your article. It is short and to the point. The sense of its importance will sink into the mind of every reader. The main teaching of it is easy to grasp. We are islanders, surrounded by the sea. Forty millions of us are liable to suffer from want of grain, if our fleets are inadequate for the escort of the grain ships to our ports. There is no doubt of that, and public men have during the last few years been untiring in their efforts to teach us.

"Your idea is wise, only because we are so unwise. For since we are so stubborn as not to assist agriculture in our islands, and so make wheat-growing profitable, we must perforce build a strong navy to protect the ocean highway and a thousand granaries.

"Personally, I should prefer to distribute the cost of these granaries as premiums for the production of wheat, for in that way much of the money would come back to the Government. . . . The nation is not yet in a mood to listen to reason, and, in the mean time, the idea of granaries is not bad.

"Yours very truly,

"HENRY M. STANLEY."

Such replies as these from such men, and the encouragement of the editor of the *Nineteenth Century*, made me feel that the

importance of the question raised would make amends for the shortcomings and want of authority of the writer of the article,

“CORN STORES FOR WAR TIME,”

which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* for February, 1896. By Mr. Knowles's kind permission I, in this chapter, reprint it, giving afterwards some of the many comments it elicited and my replies.

In the article referred to, I endeavoured, as others before me have done, to call public attention to the fact that we, as a nation, are living at the mercy of possible enemies—I mean that they could starve us if they wished to do so.

The very great amount of notice the article received from the public press of this country, and the numbers of letters I received from all parts about it, justify me, I think, in saying that I was not unsuccessful in my endeavour.

It was naturally very gratifying to me to find a journal of such influence as the *Pall Mall Gazette* referring to my suggestion as follows:—

"Mr. R. B. Marston has contributed to the  
 " *Daily News* what we think a very sane and  
 " prudent letter on our food supply in war time.  
 " It is claimed for Lord Wolseley that he settled  
 " this question the other day by contending that  
 " England could never be blockaded. That is  
 " true, although it is quite certain that the price  
 " of every commodity, including bread, would go  
 " up very heavily, blockade or no blockade. But  
 " that is not Mr. Marston's point. Supposing  
 " we were at war with one of the nations from  
 " which we import our main supplies of corn:  
 " what then? Mr. Marston proposes to increase  
 " our corn reserve from three months' provision,  
 " at which it stands at present, until it is enough  
 " to last us for the year. During that year it  
 " would, of course, pay every man who has a  
 " rod of ground to grow corn upon it, and we  
 " should be more or less self-supporting. We  
 " could also encourage corn-raising, he says, in  
 " Canada and Australia. Another, and perhaps  
 " a simpler, experiment would be to encourage it  
 " all over the Empire at once. There is in  
 " Burma, for instance, all along the tributaries  
 " of the Irrawaddy the finest corn land in the  
 " world. Transport thence would be cheap, as it  
 " would be wholly by water. Obviously it needs  
 " no system of state bounties, but simply the  
 " information and encouragement of private  
 " enterprise, to start Englishmen in so favour-  
 " able a business. The corn that Burma could

“produce, say experts, could easily supply all  
“the needs of these islands.”

And then another most influential paper, the *St. James's Gazette*, said—

“Mr. Marston sensibly proposes that we  
“should lay up stores of corn at however great  
“an outlay of money.”

In the Appendix I have referred to some other of the many criticisms which the following article gave rise to. I beg the reader kindly to note that it was written before Christmas, 1895, and remembering the wisdom of the old maxim, “Fas est et ab hoste doceri,” I have in this book enlarged and also in some respects modified my original suggestion, helped not a little in the attempt both by the hostile as well as the friendly criticism it met with.

### CORN STORES FOR WAR TIME.

Reprinted, by permission, from the *Nineteenth Century*, February, 1896.

“THE events of the last few weeks have  
“given this country a somewhat rude  
“awakening. We have been threatened

"with war from quarters whence we least  
"expected it.

"Though the war clouds which hung  
"over the Empire appear to be lifting,  
"their effect will not soon be forgotten.

"One lesson they have taught the  
"world, or rather reminded it of, is this  
"—that whether we are Conservatives,  
"Liberals, or Radicals, we shall stand  
"shoulder to shoulder in defence of our  
"rights, and that there is no stronger  
"power in the world than that 'senti-  
"ment' which binds our Empire together.

"One lesson this threat of war should  
"teach us is, that we must rely upon  
"ourselves alone to maintain our position  
"in the world, and, to do that, we must  
"be prepared to pay a high premium.  
"We must be prepared to see our foreign  
"food supply in any event most seriously  
"crippled in war time — in a *possible*  
"event, entirely cut off.

"Are we prepared? Surely every man  
"who knows under what precarious con-  
"ditions we in Great Britain live, and  
"move, and have our being, must answer

“—No. Not since the world began is  
“there an instance other than our own  
“of a nation of near forty millions,  
“surrounded by the sea, being almost  
“entirely dependent for sustenance on  
“other countries.

“Strong as our war fleet is, it is very  
“far from being strong enough to suc-  
“cessfully engage a possible combination  
“of fleets, and at the same time protect  
“our sea-borne food supply. If the  
“United States and Russia declared war  
“with us, there would practically be no  
“food supply left to protect. They  
“would keep the immense supplies we  
“now get from them at home, and the  
“fear of capture or destruction would  
“effectually prevent Argentina and other  
“neutrals from sending food to us in any  
“sufficient quantity.

“What is wanted is that, instead of  
“only a precarious week’s supply, we  
“should have stored up in this country  
“enough corn to last for at least twelve  
“months. Experts in the corn trade  
“agree that there would be no insuper-



"able difficulty in gradually accumulating  
 "this store of corn; it would be for  
 "experts to advise as to the best methods  
 "and places of storage.

"Perhaps the best plan would be to  
 "distribute it over the country in maga-  
 "zines at the military depôts, giving  
 "the military authorities charge of it;  
 "but if it was *in the country and safe*,  
 "it would not so much matter where  
 "it was. Although most of our corn is  
 "made into flour at the great ports, it  
 "would not be wise, seeing that most  
 "of them are so defenceless, to store it  
 "there.

"The entire control and management  
 "of this great national store of corn  
 "should be under some permanent  
 "Government department. Although  
 "its existence could not fail to have a  
 "steady effect on the corn market,\* it  
 "should be outside all speculative in-  
 "fluences, the price at which it would  
 "be sold, when necessary to sell it, being  
 "fixed by law. It would be no sacrifice,

\* For details see later chapters.

“in the long run, for the country to  
“provide such a reserve of food, as it  
“would always be worth its cost.

“Other nations accumulate gold for  
“use in war time: we should have a  
“war-chest of corn. If we have it, what  
“will it do?

“It will give our navy time to devote  
“itself to the crushing of the navy or  
“navies opposed to us; it will give us  
“time, with our great resources, to  
“augment our fighting fleet to almost  
“any extent; and it will give our farmers  
“time to grow three or four times as  
“much corn and breed a much larger  
“quantity of cattle and sheep, than they  
“now do.

“The argument that we could not  
“grow the corn, as we are dependent on  
“foreign manures, leaves out of view the  
“fact that we buy foreign manures for  
“the same reason that we buy foreign  
“corn, because it is cheaper than making  
“them at home. Are the millions of  
“tons of sewage now produced and  
“wasted by our towns and villages worth

"nothing? Are our chemists incapable  
"of manufacturing artificial manures if  
"it will pay them to do so?

"If it is true that this country is like  
"—nay, is in fact—a great fortress, is  
"it not equally true that it is impreg-  
"nable only in the measure in which  
"it can resist famine, as Paris was and  
"Plevna? \*

"Imagine for a moment the position  
"of London and our other great towns  
"starving. Hundreds of thousands of  
"their inhabitants are nearly starving  
"now, with foreign food of all kinds  
"cheaper than ever before.

"What Government, embarrassed with  
"the defence of the Empire, could also  
"deal with the demands of starving  
"millions at home? We may be splen-  
"didly successful at sea, and yet be  
"compelled to an inglorious, perhaps  
"ruinous, peace by the pressure of  
"famine in our midst.

"We sleep snugly in our beds at

"\* Moltke said he knew twenty ways of invading  
"England, but none of getting out again.

“night, we hug ourselves to sleep with  
“visions of the deeds of our fleet, but  
“we forget, because we have not for  
“generations experienced, the terrors of  
“famine gnawing at our vitals. And  
“while there were only some twelve or  
“fifteen millions to feed at the end of  
“the last century, there are nearly forty  
“millions now.

“Is there anything impossible or im-  
“practicable in the suggestion here  
“made?

“We have had peace so long that  
“have we not one and all utterly failed  
“to realize what is before us, what must  
“come, if our food supply from abroad  
“is cut off and we have no home reserve  
“to fall back on?

“What we shall want at the outbreak  
“of our next great war is not money,  
“not men, not at first even ships—but  
“TIME.

“Time to tide over those few months  
“of famine, inevitable if we have not  
“prepared for them.

“What a glorious sense of security

"would be ours if we had enough corn  
 "stored to keep our millions alive and  
 "well until we could sow and reap the  
 "greatest harvest ever garnered in our  
 "country.

"With the knowledge that we had  
 "this reserve of food our statesmen  
 "would be free of the fear of such a  
 "famine as this land has never felt or  
 "dreamed of, a famine which would  
 "force our rulers to beg for peace at any  
 "price.

"The following figures are from the  
 "'Corn Trade Year Book':—

	Qrs.
"Net consumption of breadstuffs in this "country during twelve months "ended 1894-1895, exclusive of "wheat fed on the farms or used "for seed . . . . .	29,344,377
"Total import wheat and flour . . . .	25,078,300
"grown at home . . . . .	7,588,000
"The difference between these "two sets of figures—viz. about "3,300,000 quarters—would prac- "tically mean the quantity con- "sumed on the farms for feeding "stock and the quantity used for "seed.	

Principal corn-exporting countries	Qrs.
“to United Kingdom, flour	
“reckoned as wheat:	
“United States . . . . .	10,920,000
“Russia . . . . .	5,410,000
“Argentina . . . . .	3,843,000
“India . . . . .	1,497,000
“Canada . . . . .	1,077,000
“Australia . . . . .	988,000
“Uruguay. . . . .	128,500
“Chili . . . . .	295,600
“Roumania . . . . .	101,400
“and the balance from Germany, Turkey,	
“Persia, etc.	

“It would be beyond the scope of this article to deal more than generally with the suggestion made. That the country would have to make some sacrifice goes without saying. It will be seen that if we establish a reserve of corn sufficient for one year’s consumption, we must buy about twenty-five million quarters, which, at the average price of wheat now, would mean, roughly, £30,000,000 sterling. It is obvious that we could not buy this all at once; it must be done by advance orders gradually, and be, as it were, grown specially for us.

“These £30,000,000 sterling could be

"raised, and should be raised in this  
 "country alone, by the issue of Imperial  
 "Corn Bonds bearing interest at  $2\frac{3}{4}$  or 3  
 "per cent., redeemable at the option of  
 "the Government. The interest should  
 "be paid by an addition to the income  
 "tax. If it was necessary to make the  
 "interest on the bonds as high as 3 per  
 "cent., it would amount to £900,000 per  
 "annum, and an addition of only one  
 "penny to the income tax would produce  
 "(on the returns of 1893) £2,239,800,  
 "leaving an ample margin for con-  
 "struction of granaries and cost of  
 "maintenance.

"If it is objected that an addition to  
 "the income tax would be unfair for this  
 "purpose, because the reserve of corn  
 "would be chiefly for the benefit of those  
 "who do not pay income tax, then the  
 "money would have to be raised by a  
 "Sinking Fund probably.

"It will be said that directly it was  
 "known that the Government intended  
 "to establish such a reserve of corn the  
 "price would go up, and it doubtless

“would, but the Government would fix  
“its own price, and refuse to buy except  
“at that price, and would get it in time.  
“In any case the price would be nothing  
“like what it would be in war time. In  
“1812 the price of wheat was £6 6s. 0d.  
“per quarter; just at present it is about  
“£1 6s. 0d., though the average for 1894  
“was only 22s.

“It is not contended that £30,000,000  
“worth of corn stored in this country  
“would enable us all to live as com-  
“fortably as we do now if all our food  
“supplies from abroad were cut off, or  
“that this is the limit of the quantity  
“we ought to have as a reserve; but if  
“our land is not cultivated, it is not  
“because it is barren, and the sole object  
“of the reserve would be to *give us time*  
“to make it again productive of cereals  
“and live stock to the extent of our  
“needs. As our need lessened, that of  
“our enemies to again sell us their sur-  
“plus would increase—their starving pro-  
“ducers would fight on our side for peace.

“Reservoirs of corn have become as



"much a necessity for the preservation  
"of the national life of this country as  
"reservoirs of water.

"It might well be that once our  
"farmers had again, as formerly, over-  
"taken with their supplies the demands  
"of the country, they could retain the  
"position, and the golden days of agri-  
"culture would return. With half their  
"freight-waggons idle, our railway com-  
"panies would distribute the enormously  
"increased production of our fields and  
"seas at even lower rates than they now  
"charge the foreigner.

"We provision Gibraltar for two years,  
"and this country, the citadel of the  
"Empire, with a week's supply. What  
"do our possible enemies calculate on  
"when thinking of war with us? Not  
"that they could beat us in battle on the  
"sea. No, their sole hope is, as was  
"Napoleon's, to 'destroy her commerce  
"—starve her to death.'

"R. B. MARSTON." \*

\* The suggestions made in this article more than twelve months ago are worked out in greater detail, and with both modifications and additions in this book.—R. B. M.

As will be seen presently, the writer of the weekly article "Agriculture at Home and Abroad," in the *Standard*, did me the honour to criticise my statements, and dispute—I wish I could say refute—my arguments.

There is one point in the first criticism that appeared in the *Standard* to which I would like specially to refer, and that is where the writer says—

"It would be a very short-sighted policy on the part of farmers to advocate this scheme, especially as English wheat is seldom dry enough to store well, and it would be much less wasteful to store foreign grain."

I have many friends among English farmers, and this admonition from the *Standard* brought their wrath down on my head. But the last thing I would do—knowing something of the difficulties and distress under which our farmers have so nobly fought for many years past—is to advocate anything which would injure them, or our corn-merchants either, and the measure I suggested in the *Nineteenth Century* and have elaborated in these pages will not, I am convinced, injure them one iota.

In the first place, our farmers and our corn-merchants would be in the long run as much affected by a national disaster arising from stoppage of our foreign food supplies as any other class of the community. What would it benefit them if at the beginning of a great war and for some time after they made fortunes out of the rest of the nation, if it turned out—as I fully believe it might turn out—that in the end their utmost endeavours to supply bread at any price were hopelessly inadequate? Every farmer and every corn-merchant in this country is as much interested in this question as are any other of our millions of bread-eaters.

It has been suggested to me by authorities in the corn trade that it might be quite possible when forming the reserve to use a large proportion of home-grown wheat—say, one-third—as a mixture of two-thirds foreign and one-third home-grown wheat keeps well and forms the best combination for producing good bread.

But this question and the question of the amount of the reserve could only be settled by a Royal Commission. I see that Mr. Robert

A. Yerburgh, M.P. (whose scheme for a reserve of corn I shall refer to later on), suggests that about ten million quarters would be enough.

I took twenty-five million as my basis simply because that is the amount we *actually imported* in 1895; and it must never be forgotten that we import a still larger quantity of *other* grain, which comes from the same countries as our wheat supply.

I had some idea, but not until I had seen the criticisms of the corn-trade papers on my article had I any adequate idea of the enormous extent of our utter dependence for bread alone on the goodwill of foreigners. I found then that the *Miller*, one of the leading papers in the corn trade, had for years past been pointing to this national danger.

I can only hope that some national tribunal may be appointed—such as a Royal Commission, to include experts and members of both houses of Parliament, to consider the question; and no one hopes more than I do that they may prove either that there is no necessity for such an insurance against famine as I propose, or that, if there is, that some better scheme than mine may be found.

I have been called a faddist, a panic-monger, and a protectionist—for which I care nothing. The only protection I want is from the possibility of the horrors of famine in this country, arising from the fact that we are all living on food grown by nations which have it in their absolute power to refuse us that food.

## CHAPTER III.

## SOME CRITICISMS AND REPLIES.

BEFORE giving some criticisms on the article in the *Nineteenth Century*, reprinted in the preceding chapter, I should like to give some idea of the stupendous quantity of wheat we import, and to reiterate that, enormous as it is, it is only half the total amount of grain imported, which includes maize, barley, oats, rye, etc.

## TWENTY-FIVE MILLION QUARTERS OF WHEAT.

It is difficult, in fact impossible, to realize what an enormous amount of food this means. A rough idea may be got from the following illustration, which a friend, a railway engineer, kindly worked out for me :—

It means that if twenty-five quarters is allowed as a load (average) of a railway goods

waggon, it would require a million such rail-  
way goods waggons, and, divided into trains  
of twenty-five trucks, it would require forty  
thousand engines, and would occupy, with  
brakes, three thousand seven hundred and  
forty-eight miles, or seven hundred miles more  
than the distance between Liverpool and New  
York.

### THE GREAT PYRAMID OF CHEOPS.

“The great pyramid of Cheops is the largest structure ever erected by the hand of man. Its original dimensions at the base were seven hundred and sixty-four feet square, and its perpendicular height in the highest point, four hundred and eighty-eight feet; it covers four acres, one rood, and twenty-two rods of ground, and has been estimated by an eminent English architect to have cost not less than thirty-three million pounds sterling. It was begun 2170 B.C. It is estimated that about five million tons of hewn stone were used in its construction, and the evidence shows that these stones were brought from quarries in Arabia, about seven hundred miles distant.”

I have never seen the great pyramid of Cheops, but I give these particulars about it,

as I find it weighs, as will be seen by referring to the diagram at the beginning of this book, the same as our annual loaf of imported bread, its cost is also nearly the same, while for size—our imported five-million-ton loaf would quite eclipse a five-million-ton stone pyramid—and we go as many thousands of miles for our corn as the Egyptians did hundreds for their stones. “Corn in Egypt” is a good old synonym for “plenty,” only what we want is “Corn in England.” \*

\* Since writing this note on the Pyramid, I see to-day, Feb. 1, 1897, an interesting leading article in the *Standard*, from which I have taken this extract, giving further details of size, etc.:—

“By tram to the Pyramids! It is announced, in a telegram we print to-day, that the Egyptian Government has granted a concession to the Cairo Company to construct a line from that city to these splendid monuments of antiquity. Forty years ago the visitor, unless he chose to trudge afoot like a peasant, rode thither in time-honoured fashion on a donkey. Then a road for carriages was made, and the first persons to drive there without a break, as the guide-books tell us, were the Prince and Princess of Wales, in 1868. The next thing will, perhaps, be a railway and a constant service of excursion trains—unless we evacuate the country and abandon it to misrule and financial disaster. We trust that this possibility will not be seized upon as another argument



Curiously enough, a writer in the *Quarterly Review*, about forty-five years ago (No. CXC.), estimated that the half-quartern loaves eaten in a year in London then, when the population was half what it is now, would, if piled up, form a pyramid measuring two hundred square yards at the base, and extend into the air to a height of 1293 feet, or nearly three times the height of St. Paul's. If we double these figures to get the present five million population for London's annual loaf, and multiply that by eight to get the total population of the United Kingdom, we find, supposing the *Quarterly Reviewer's* original estimate to be correct, that, while our

in favour of withdrawal, and bring the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments to the aid of Mr. Labouchere. The Pyramids, of course, have long been known to antiquaries, but Professor Flinders Petrie's patient explorations have added much to our knowledge. That they were sepulchral monuments no one now doubts. But on what a scale! The base of the Great Pyramid, according to him, measures not quite seven hundred and fifty-six feet along each side, and the original height of the apex was a little over four hundred and eighty-one feet. The space covered was originally sixty-three thousand four hundred and forty-four square feet, or about the size of Lincoln's-inn-fields."

imported wheat weighs about the same as the great pyramid of Cheops (five million tons), when baked into bread it would make a pyramid about seven miles in circumference at the base, and over twenty thousand feet in height. If erected in Richmond Park it would nearly cover it, and its snow-clad peak would be visible for hundreds of miles. One of my critics called it "the greatest white elephant the world has ever seen. It would make us the laughingstock of weevils, mice, and men!" I have, I hope, proved in this book that under my plan no mouse or weevil could touch this loaf, and that if we had it in stock instead of being the laughingstock of other nations, who know we are living in a fool's paradise, the laugh would be on our side.

CRITICISM OF THE *Standard*,  
FEB. 4, 1896.

"The recent rumours of possible war have given encouragement to the project of State granaries for the storing of wheat as a security against famine in the event of actual war between this country and one or more of the great Powers.

REPLY IN THE *Standard*, FEB.  
6, 1896.

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE  
*Standard*.

"SIR, — In your article on 'Agriculture at Home and Abroad' in the *Standard* of the 4th inst., you criticise somewhat adversely my article, 'Corn Stores for War Time,' which appears in the current

At the recent meeting of the Gloucestershire Chamber of Agriculture, a resolution was unanimously carried, recommending the subject for discussion by the Central Chamber. In moving the resolution, Mr. St. John Ackers is reported to have declared that there should be always in store a supply of corn sufficient for three years' consumption. If this is not a misprint for three months' consumption, it is altogether preposterous. In the new number of the *Nineteenth Century*, Mr. R. B. Marston also advocates corn stores for war time. He contends that, 'instead of only a precarious week's supply,' we should have stored up enough corn to last for at least twelve months. Seeing that, except shortly before harvest, we have rarely less than three months' supply of wheat and flour in the country, or close to it, in cargoes, including stocks in the hands of farmers, merchants, and millers, as well as those held at the ports, Mr. Marston's

number of the *Nineteenth Century*.

"I cannot help thinking you have misunderstood my suggestion, which is, briefly, this:— That during peace time the Government should buy from abroad by advance orders, at a given price, corn to be gradually stored up in this country until we had enough to last for twelve months. I know that English corn is rarely dry enough to keep well, but foreign corn will keep good for years if properly turned and handled. But I do not propose to keep it for years. I propose to pass our regular supplies through national granaries, established in different parts of the country, where they would be safe from the mob in a time of famine. The price need be no more affected than the Government allowed it to be. As the corn was taken out so it would be renewed, and yet we should hold, in the country, enough to last for twelve months. Then, if we were suddenly attacked by the United States and Russia, and the enormous supplies we get from them cut off, as they would be, we should have this great reserve under Government control to last us until our farmers could grow what we require, or the war was over. I hope, as every one does, that our food supply will never be cut off, but I think it would be unwise to trust to even the United States, for instance, which alone supplies more than a third of our import of breadstuffs.

'precarious week's supply' needs explanation. Besides, other kinds of grain would be used for bread in an emergency. He says that we should store twenty-five million quarters of wheat, costing about thirty million pounds, and that this would not involve any sacrifice, as the grain would always be worth its cost, though he admits that interest at  $2\frac{3}{4}$  to 3 per cent. on the sum named would have to be raised by taxation, with something extra for granaries and expenses of storing. He ignores the waste and depreciation of grain kept for many months, the probable fall in its value, and the commission on buying and selling. There would usually be a rise in price when the Government were buying, and a fall when they were selling. Altogether, the annual expense would run into some millions of pounds. Again, it would be impossible to buy and sell such large stocks of wheat without deranging the markets, and the probable ruin of many men engaged in the

"You say 'Mr. Marston's precarious week's supply' needs explanation, and you say 'we have rarely less than three months' supply, except shortly before harvest.' Well, might we not be attacked just before harvest? It would be a good time to select, and we should have no choice in the matter. I think it is a tremendous endorsement of my argument that the *Standard* should admit that, at the best, we are only provisioned with corn for some three months. I said a week's supply, because corn is only one of the kinds of food supply which would be stopped, although the most important. But I say that on the morrow of a Declaration of War against us by two Great Powers, the price of bread would go up so that it would be in a few days beyond the reach of our millions, and in a few weeks a luxury for the rich.

"You say, 'As for the taxpayers generally, it would be far cheaper to pay almost any price for grain in the event of war being imminent than to be at a constant heavy expense by way of insurance against a catastrophe that may never occur.' Yes, but we could not get it if war was imminent, and to be without it means inevitably such a famine as no Government could control; if we had a far more powerful fleet than we have, we could not compel Russia or the United States, or both, to sell us their corn; they would not have it to sell. It would have to be, as I say in

trade; while the great accumulation would be a constant incubus, keeping prices low after it had been acquired, to the serious injury of producers. It is nonsense to talk of the Government fixing the price of wheat when it had to be sold. Similarly, Mr. Marston's idea of the plan leading to the growth in this country of all the wheat required for consumption is altogether visionary. Instead of paying better, wheat-growing would be even less remunerative than it is now. It would be a very short-sighted policy on the part of farmers to advocate this scheme, especially as English wheat is seldom dry enough to store well, and it would be much less wasteful to store foreign grain. As for the taxpayers generally, it would be far cheaper to pay almost any price for grain in the event of war being imminent than to be at a constant heavy expense by way of insurance against a catastrophe that might never occur."

One of my correspondents says, "I see the *Standard*

my article, grown for us in time of peace, and gradually accumulated. It might take some years to do it. We should be in a terrible state if we had no reserve. It may be useful to point out what twenty-five million quarters of wheat means. It means that if twenty-five quarters is allowed as a load (average) of a railway goods waggon, it would require a million such railway waggons, and, divided into trains of twenty-five trucks, it would require forty thousand engines, and would occupy, with brakes, three thousand seven hundred and forty-eight miles, or seven hundred miles more than the distance between Liverpool and New York.

"It is difficult to realize this vast quantity of corn—but we get it now regularly and eat it, and if we cannot get it, well, the effect is too awful to contemplate. I am no pessimist or alarmist; what I say has been said before by men whose words have far greater weight than any mine can have. I write from long study of the question and absolute conviction that unless we provide an immense reserve of food, famine at home will compel us to give in almost before we have begun to draw on our boundless resources for making war. It is impossible to grow wheat in three months, and you admit, sir, that that is the limit of our supply. There may be great difficulties, but there is nothing impossible in the providing this reserve of

speaks of the contingency to be provided against as one that 'might never occur.' Certainly it would never occur twice."  
R. B. M.

bread, and it may save the empire.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"R. B. MARSTON.

"February 5, 1896."

CRITICISM OF THE *Standard*,  
FEB. 7, 1896.

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE  
*Standard*.

"SIR,—Mr. Marston has not answered the main objection to his scheme, which is that an extremely heavy expenditure incurred annually and permanently by way of insurance against a catastrophe that may never occur would be intolerable, and worse than the utmost outlay that would be necessary to attract sufficient corn to our shores in an emergency. He greatly underrates the cost of his plan when he assumes that a penny of income tax would meet it. The commission on buying and selling the twenty-five million quarters of wheat

REPLY IN THE *Standard*,  
Feb. 10, 1896.

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE  
*Standard*.

"SIR,—It would not be for me to venture to dispute the accuracy of the views of such an authority as the writer of 'Agriculture at Home and Abroad' in the *Standard*. I confess that he makes me think I have underrated the annual cost to the nation of providing a reserve of corn for twelve months; also that, possibly, that is an unnecessarily long period. But, after all, the difference, when the end in view is considered, is not great. I put it at an additional penny on the income tax, producing (on the returns of 1893) £2,239,800. Your reviewer says it would probably be at least four millions, or about another three farthings on the present returns. I suggested twelve months, as that is the period between one harvest and another. If this period could safely be reduced, the cost would be, of course, reduced, *pro rata*.

"Your reviewer says: 'In an emergency we could make bread from barley, oats, rye, and maize.' I must say that with such a prospect in view, I

that he would pass annually through the State granaries would not be less than one million two hundred and fifty thousand pounds, and, in addition, there would be the heavy cost of building and maintaining the granaries, the interest on the capital sum and on the money sunk in the wheat, the cost of storing and insurance, loss from waste and deterioration, and a probable further loss between buying and selling. It would not be safe to put the annual cost of carrying out the scheme at less than four million pounds, and, if we spent this sum on the progressive strengthening of our Navy, we should secure much greater safety against starvation in time of war than would be afforded by the storing system. If we can maintain the command of the sea, we shall never lack food, whereas, if our Navy were utterly

should readily pay an addition to the income tax; but your reviewer does not say what he proposes to feed our horses and cattle and live stock generally on if we eat their food. Your reviewer says that my plan involves a Government monopoly of the entire foreign wheat trade if it is to succeed. I cannot see how this can possibly be so. I say in my article in the *Nineteenth Century*, that just as other nations are accumulating an immense war chest of gold, we should have an immense war chest of corn, not for sale in peace time at all. I would not dream of suggesting that the Government should turn corn-merchant; I merely suggest that the whole nation should buy corn enough to live on (in case of our supplies from America and Russia being cut off) until our farmers could grow what we want. I have received many letters from corn-merchants and others, pointing out that the store of corn would gradually deteriorate. But I propose to pass our current supplies through granaries established in convenient and safe places, and the price of those current supplies would be no more affected than in going through a railway tunnel.

"The reserve would be purely and solely for use in case of a great famine being imminent; not a grain of it would ever be sold in peace time, and yet it would always be perfectly fresh and good, as we should pass our current supplies through it.

defeated, no amount of food would secure us from an overwhelming invasion.

“Nothing short of an effective blockade of all the ports in the United Kingdom could prevent corn from reaching us in time of war, and no two Powers could maintain such a blockade in the face of our existing Navy. Moreover, if war were imminent, in the course of a few weeks, by means of liberal offers, we could accumulate from various near countries enough grain of different kinds to make up, with our own stock, a year’s supply of breadstuffs. In an emergency we could make bread from barley, oats, rye, and maize, as well as from wheat, while rice and various other raw or manufactured farinaceous foods would be available to augment our resources.

“There are other objections to Mr. Marston’s plan besides its

How could the existence of this store in Great Britain affect prices, with the guarantee of the British Government that it could never be sold except to avert famine in war time? The supply would always be kept at one level. If there was an abundant harvest abroad, corn would be cheap; if scanty, it would be dear; but our reserve could never affect the price, because it would never be for sale when foreign corn was to be had.

“This is how it would work. Wheat being at its present price of about twenty-six shillings per quarter, an English corn-merchant receives from Chicago, say, one thousand pounds’ worth of it; he is compelled by law to deliver this corn to the Government, and in return he gets an order for one thousand pounds’ worth of corn to be delivered to him, say, at any of the Government stores distributed over the country. If he gave American corn he would get American corn in exchange; if from Russia, then Russian corn, and so on; but he would still have it, and the price would still be the same. If the market price was sixty shillings, the operation would be the same—the Government would make the exchange irrespective of any fluctuation in the market price.

“I cannot see how the announcement that the British Government intended to establish a reserve of corn for use in war time need upset the corn-market, if it was quietly done.



costliness. It involves a Government monopoly of the entire foreign wheat trade, if it is to succeed, as the twenty-five million quarters to be bought and sold annually would be all the wheat, including flour, that we should need to import.\* But

I suggest it may take some years to do; that the orders should be given in advance, and at a fixed and known price, and distributed over the markets of the world. Five million quarters bought in this way in one year, distributed over the world, would not affect prices much, I fancy; and in five years we should have our reserve.

"It could not affect our farmers in any way, except that

\* This is absolutely contrary to the *chief feature* of my proposal, and I agree that for the Government to *buy and sell* annually would be fatal to my proposal, or, I venture to think, any proposal, for forming a reserve. My suggestion, and I cannot sufficiently repeat it, is that the Government should gradually accumulate, during a period of five years, an amount of wheat equal to one year's import, that it should never sell it until famine threatened, in consequence of war, or perhaps only famine in other countries, or in consequence, possibly, of war here and famine in America. My proposal does *not* mean a monopoly of our entire foreign wheat trade, nor would it involve the slightest interference with that trade except, as I believe, to its advantage. All I suggest is that the Government should have the power to take as much or as little of the new corn as it liked and *exchange* it for an exact *equivalent* of corn from its store. It would, in the first instance, form its reserve only from the best kinds of wheat, consequently it would exchange only for the best kinds. Inferior kinds it would pass on to the importer. But by having the power to exchange it would be able to take as much as was necessary to keep its reserve always in good condition. A certain amount of last year's wheat in good condition *is always and must always be worth exactly the same* as a certain amount of this year's wheat; the money value of the wheat in the Government granaries would rise and fall with the market price, but it could not affect that price, because every original thousand pounds' worth of new wheat it took from that market would instantly be replaced by one thousand pounds of old corn it put on that market.

As I have proved in my chapter on our corn stores, now existing in Malta, wheat can be kept in good condition for three or four years. This is all in favour of my proposal, because it would enable the

the plan would collapse in a year or two, in consequence of the intolerable evils which would result from its operation. Mr. Marston contemplates fresh foreign production of wheat to meet the demand of our proposed State granaries, and this would mean worse over-production and lower prices than ever. Then, as we should certainly get wheat in addition to the full foreign supply needed to keep up our stock of twenty-five million quarters, and foreign flour as well, our markets would be constantly glutted, and wheat-growing in this country would

in a time of famine it would give them time to grow as much, say, as the Government guaranteed to buy at a settled price. Only in time of famine would the great store of corn be sold to the people to keep them alive. Your reviewer says—'It would be far cheaper to pay almost any price for grain in the event of war being imminent.' I say we could not buy the corn we should want under such circumstances at a moment's notice. If we could, it is ample proof that there is no difficulty in storing corn, and that, instead of its being in store in Russia and America, etc., it should be safe in our country—bought in time of peace at a reasonable price. Your reviewer says—'If we can maintain the command of the sea, we shall never lack food.' We had the command of the sea when at war in 1800 and 1801. We had then only fifteen millions to feed, as against forty millions now. We then grew most of our

Government to allow for the inevitable fluctuation in the quality and amount of our annual import. I mean, it would give the Government the option of changing some million quarters, more or less, one year than it did at another. As regards what the reserve would *average* over a period of ten or twenty years, that would depend entirely on the relative proportions of our home-grown and our imported wheat. The more we grew every year the less we should have to store, if our imports lessened in proportion, but, unfortunately, all the facts point in the other direction, *i.e.* of still larger imports and less home-grown wheat.

I have dealt with this matter much more fully in other chapters—R. B. M.

be annihilated. The inevitable ruin of thousands of farmers and grain traders by an attempt on the part of the Government to monopolize the entire foreign wheat trade would produce an overwhelming agitation against the continuance of such a plan in times of peace, and it would have to be given up after all the expenditure on State granaries had been incurred.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"THE WRITER OF 'AGRICULTURE AT HOME AND ABROAD.'

"February 6."

corn at home, instead of importing most of it from our possible enemies, and yet the price of wheat was five pounds sixteen shillings per quarter for the two years.

"I do not believe we shall lose the command of the sea, if we can provide against famine at home; and no one hopes more fervently than I do that I am wrong in my views, and that a reserve of corn is unnecessary.

"In 1812, when at war with the infant Republic of America, the average price of wheat for the year was over six pounds six shillings per quarter. At this figure, the thirty millions sterling I propose to spend gradually in peace time would rise to about one hundred and eighty millions sterling in war time, even with the command of the sea.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"R. B. MARSTON.

"February 7, 1896."

Letter signed "Mark Lane" in the *Standard*,  
February 11, 1896.

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE *Standard*."

"SIR,

"The article of the talented contributor of your weekly Agricultural Article in the *Standard* of the 4th, and the letter of Mr. R. B. Marston in your issue of the 6th inst., have brought the

above subject to the front. I do not believe that the English people at all realize, when they extol the benefit of a cheap loaf, the straitened circumstances in which this country is placed at the present time. Those who regard the cheap loaf as the greatest of blessings, ought to look forward as well as backward. At the present moment there is only about 10 weeks' supply of wheat and flour available in this country, and the slightest interference on the part of any powerful nation, tending either to divert or destroy the supplies on passage, would be attended by momentous consequences. Then the very policy which has made wheat so cheap, and thereby practically restricted to three or four highly-favoured countries the power of exporting, would cause it to be abnormally dear. When Mr. Marston says that 'the price of wheat in a few weeks would be beyond the reach of our millions,' and 'a luxury for the rich alone,' he is well within the mark.

“Personally, until recently I have argued  
“against a Government stock. I have con-  
“sidered that it would be contrary to the  
“interests of British farmers for the Government  
“to interfere with their getting the highest price  
“that circumstances allowed for their produce.  
“They have stood the racket of the hard times,  
“and have a right to gain by contingencies, but  
“now that the acreage of wheat has decreased to

“well-nigh a vanishing point, it must be evident  
“that the very few only would gain (even amongst  
“the agriculturists themselves), while the many  
“amongst the teeming millions would suffer  
“enormously by any real interference with our  
“supplies from abroad. Mr. Marston’s article  
“in the *Nineteenth Century* proposes a vast  
“measure for the storage of grain; more, in  
“fact, than is at all necessary, in my humble  
“opinion. Sir Blundell Maple and others have  
“advocated a bounty on the growth of wheat in  
“this country. This would act as a premium  
“on exhaustive farming, for wheat and its straw  
“is a much more exhausting crop than most  
“others. Moreover, the bounty would have to  
“be at least two pounds per acre to make a  
“very great difference within a reasonable period  
“of time.

“Recent events have caused many to see that,  
“although a strong fleet is an imperative neces-  
“sity, yet it is not our first line of defence. The  
“food supply is our first line of defence, and  
“it ought to receive more attention from our  
“Government, and especially so at the present  
“time, when the great majority of the voters  
“will be satisfied with whatever those now in  
“office decide to do for the people’s good. I would  
“like to ask your intelligent Correspondent to  
“explain more fully when he says, ‘As for the  
“taxpayers generally, it would be far cheaper to  
“pay almost any price for grain in the event of

“war being imminent, than to be at a constant  
“heavy expense by way of insurance against a  
“contingency that might never occur.’ Will he  
“kindly tell us from what country we could have  
“got these emergency supplies of which he speaks,  
“supposing there had been a combination of  
“certain nations, which shall be nameless, only  
“a few weeks ago, their object being to bring us  
“to submission by simply withholding their food  
“supply? He must be quite as well aware as  
“I am of the fact that nearly all nations are now  
“importers of corn, and does he think that any  
“of those countries which require imports would  
“allow their slender stocks to be diminished for  
“the sake of saving us? Is it not far more  
“probable that one and all of them would have  
“immediately prohibited the export?

“The policy of this country is to allow willingly  
 “to a great producing country like Russia that  
 “reasonable development which we claim for our-  
 “selves, to keep on friendly terms both with the  
 “United States and with France, to develop the  
 “productive powers of our home and Colonial  
 “farmers to the utmost, and to keep, say four or  
 “at most six months’ supply of wheat out of the  
 “reach of all speculators at home. I do not  
 “think anything but wheat is absolutely neces-  
 “sary. Our cattle would have to go on short  
 “commons. Such wheat as is grown in warm

“climates, such as California, Australia, Chili,  
“and some parts of India, would keep for two  
“or three years without deterioration. The  
“finest wheats of the North-West and Manitoba,  
“as well as the best Russian, would also keep  
“for nearly as long in storehouses built with all  
“the most recent improvements, and the fear  
“which your able correspondent expresses, of a  
“fall in price when the necessary time for selling  
“came round, would be exactly counteracted by  
“the necessity of replacing by buying new stock  
“as the old was sold. It often happens that  
“old wheat is more valuable than new, and in  
“that case it would not be necessary to wait for  
“signs of deterioration before selling.\*

“I am, sir, your obedient servant,

“MARK LANE.

“London, February 8, 1896.”

\* As will be seen from the previous “note,” my proposal does *not* contemplate, or involve, the necessity of *selling* at all, except in the event of a threatening famine. The Government would buy only once, it would then give back to the corn-market with one hand all that it annually took from it with the other, it would neither add to nor deduct from the current market supply, and that means that it would be impossible for it to affect market prices.—R. B. M.

## CHAPTER IV.

## COULD OUR NAVY FEED US?

*Our imported annual loaf weighs more than three times as much as the combined tonnage of the entire British War Fleet, and is not the tenth part in money value of the imports, little more than the twentieth part of the imports and exports which that fleet is expected to protect.*

It was of course impossible in a correspondence like this in the *Standard*, which I have reprinted in the preceding chapter, to go into the matter fully. I have been editor of a newspaper for nearly twenty years myself, and I acknowledge the courtesy of the *Standard* in giving me so much space as it did in reply to its criticisms.

All the same I do not think that the *Standard* has proved that I am wrong, either in saying that in certain quite possible



contingencies this country will be exposed to a famine such as it has never experienced, and might not survive—except, perhaps, as a fourth-rate broken State—and also that it is perfectly possible, without great sacrifice, if any, to prepare for and prevent it, whether it should threaten in five, or fifty, or a hundred years' time. Was it not Lord Beaconsfield who said, "It is the unexpected which happens," and bought four million pounds worth of shares in a canal, which was looked upon in this country as an impossible and absurd idea when M. de Lesseps proposed it. The shares we hold, according to *Whitaker's Almanack*, are now worth twenty-two million six hundred and twenty-seven thousand pounds. The revenue from them would far more than pay the annual cost of maintaining a year's reserve of wheat.

The letter signed "Mark Lane," evidently written by a specialist in corn-trade matters, which I do not in the least pretend to be, completely bears out what I have said.

The *Standard* says I am wrong in saying we have only a week's supply of food, and

that we have more like three months'. "Mark Lane" says I am *well within the mark!*

It is probably true that we have at certain times of the year two or three months' supply *under normal conditions*, but I am referring to the abnormal condition, viz. war, or a great famine in America, or both, and then only one thing can happen. The price will instantly rise to such a figure as will speedily place bread beyond the means of millions to purchase; and with bread, every other item of food supply will rise also. And can any one imagine that our toiling millions, only earning now just sufficient to pay for food, clothing, and lodging, will, or can rest quietly at home and die? Could that mob we saw on Jubilee Day restrain itself if starving? Could any other earthly power restrain it? Blücher is said to have looked down from St. Paul's on London and said, "What a city to sack." If he could see her five millions now he would say, "What a monster if famished."

One great English naval authority who wrote to me after reading my article, said—

“You are drawing a red herring across the path of those who want to increase our navy.”

To this I reply, no one is more anxious than I am to see our navy overpoweringly strong, or would more willingly be taxed to make it so than I am. I should like to see our army strengthened also, for it seems to me that in our next great war our home army will be drained to keep up our foreign garrisons.

The writer in question knows Captain A. T. Mahan. Let him ask Captain Mahan if he thinks I take any interest in our fleet, and also if I am wrong in saying that beyond and behind that fleet there is a danger which no strength of fleet could either prevent or avert. These laboured arguments of mine are but the echo of his teachings. “Men,” he says, when comparing the position of England now with that of Holland before we defeated her, “men may be discontented at the lack of political privilege; they will be yet more uneasy if they COME TO LACK BREAD.” One of the first things he said to me on his last visit to

England was, "Well, I suppose you feel more comfortable now?" I asked. "How?" And then he reminded me that, in a correspondence I had had with him, when he was in the Mediterranean, some years previously, when war with France was talked of, I had said that I thought we ought to spend fifty millions on our fleet, and that the Government had only to ask for it to get it. "Well," he added, "you have had thirty millions towards it already." "Yes," I replied; "and thanks chiefly to you, sir."

No, as far as my poor ability goes, I will acknowledge to be second to none in admiration for and confidence in our fleet. It is for this very reason that I want to pay my share in providing a reserve of food. I want to see our fleet untrammelled as far as may be by the necessity of convoying merchantmen, in order that it may the better devote itself to the duty of fighting battleships and preventing invasion. Every battleship or cruiser of ours called away from her fleet to hunt for some commerce-destroyer seen, or supposed to be seen, on some remote part of our coasts, will be lost to us as a fighting unit for the time,

In our last war with America, when Paul Jones and his little squadron of five frigates, and two brigantines, was harassing our coasts, restrained only by the humane orders of Dr. Franklin, and, perhaps, his own humanity, from "burning any houses or towns," we had to send "twenty sail of men-of-war" to look for him.

I know nothing much more stirring in our naval history than that duel almost under the guns of Scarborough Castle between Paul Jones, in the *Bon Homme*, and the English frigate *Serapis*, forty-four guns. "One of the finest frigates in his Majesty's navy; her crew picked men, and commanded by Captain Richard Pearson, an officer celebrated even in the British Navy for his undaunted courage and exemplary conduct." It was in many respects a counterpart of that more famous, and to us more glorious, duel between the *Chesapeake* and *Shannon*. But, when you think of it, Paul Jones must have the palm—he was bearding the sea-lion in her very den, and the mere fear of his name "kept our merchantmen rotting in the Thames."

The following extracts are from an exceedingly interesting and able article by Major

Charles à Court, in the *Nineteenth Century* for January, 1897, entitled "French Naval Policy in Peace and War":—

"The war against commerce on the sea is, however, a much more serious matter; yet it can be shown that there are many and weighty reasons for the belief that this mode of warfare will also fail to achieve the results expected. Raids upon our great maritime lines of communication will be made from bases both at home and abroad. The French naval divisions abroad, as well as their local stations, are to our forces in the same waters in the proportion of about one to six; the vessels employed are for the most part old and slow, and their coaling stations widely scattered and badly found; one cannot doubt that they will speedily find their wings clipped.

"In France, however, we find a fair number of smart cruisers now ready, and others building, which are in many ways suited for long-distance raiding. Judging by the past, some of these will act singly, others be used to form two or three flying squadrons, which will break out at the first signal, and, acting in groups, hope to be temporarily superior to our scattered cruisers on convoy and patrol; each flying squadron may be accompanied by one or two swift steam colliers or by fast liners with coal stored in place of cargo, after the example of the *Nictheroy* (ex *El Cid*), purchased by Brazil

“in 1893, which is reported to have taken one  
“thousand tons of coal in her bunkers, and to  
“have stored two thousand tons in place of  
“cargo. Auxiliary cruisers from the merchant  
“fleet will also take their part in this warfare;  
“the arrangements for the conversion of certain  
“of these vessels are now complete and can be  
“rapidly effected.

\* \* \* \* \*  
“That the war against commerce will starve  
“us into submission is a still more improbable  
“contingency. Although we must all deplore  
“the reduced acreage of cereals under cultivation  
“at home, and the reduction of stocks by mer-  
“chants owing to the fluctuation and fall of  
“prices, new grain markets like that of Argentina  
“are constantly being opened up, and the inter-  
“ception of this trade is not within the power  
“of an inferior navy itself in constant risk  
“and dread of being overwhelmed by superior  
“numbers.

\* \* \* \* \*  
“There are certain occasions when a little  
“plain speaking saves a good deal of trouble at  
“a later stage. Deceived by the pessimistic  
“vein in which so many of our writers cry out  
“before they are hurt, and delight to belittle our  
“strength and power, many foreigners, even  
“men of experience, conceive that our Empire  
“will crumble to the dust at the first touch, and  
“is everywhere vulnerable. They are wrong;  
“they are too late by two centuries.

“The Roman Empire in the zenith of its power occupied the whole of modern Europe from Britannia to the Euxine, the north coast of Africa, Asia Minor, Egypt, and Arabia; it was peopled by a hundred million souls, and defended by four hundred and fifty thousand soldiers and seamen. The British Empire is many times larger and more populous, and the citadel of the Empire, immeasurably more secure and inaccessible than Rome, has more men for its defence than had all the Roman Empire in the age of the Antonines. In wealth and in staying power it is far superior; in intelligence and belief in itself and its destiny it is at least equal. Is its hostility less to be feared than was that of Rome?

“The British Empire is a synonym for peace and liberty; but it is not defenceless, and woe betide the nation or alliance that forces it to turn its vast strength and resources to the business of war.”

Major Charles à Court, I am glad to see, uses the very expression I did in the same Review nearly twelve months previously (see p. 39). He calls this country “the citadel of the Empire.” He does not think that citadel could be reduced by famine, is the deduction some critics have drawn from his article. But he does not say that. He is



considering our position only as regards a war with France; he would unquestionably modify his forecast, for it is only a forecast of course, if other Powers joined France.

I agree with him entirely as regards the power of our Empire, and the only fear I have is that we may not have *time* to draw out that power. Take, for instance, his own argument that the interception of our food supply "from new grain markets like that of Argentina" is not within the power of an inferior navy. He is referring, it must be remembered, only to France. A glance at the diagram facing the title page of this book shows with absolute certainty that if our old corn-markets are closed to us no new markets could possibly replace their supplies—that is to say, *in time* to prevent famine in this country.\* We shall, indeed, be very fortunate if we can get in from those new markets as much as we now do.

If we could be certain that we shall never be at war with America, or that it is absolutely certain her wheat crop can never even

\* I am told, on good authority, that the Argentine wheat crop will be far less for this year.

so far fail as to be only sufficient for her own people, and that such a failure would not give Russia and France their only chance to beat us by starving us, *then*, I think, we might with enormous sacrifices fight against famine long enough to have trebled and quadrupled our home-grown food.

All the same, I cannot help thinking that Major Charles à Court's forecast of the probable effect of French commerce destroyers only on our food supplies is under-estimated.

His argument is that French warships built, building, and to be built avowedly for the purpose of destroying our food ships, will be too limited in their sphere of action by their coal-carrying capacity to "achieve the results expected."

Whether he is right or wrong we shall never know until we are next at war with France.

I feel that it is almost presumptuous on my part to say so, but it seems to me that the major has omitted two factors which told with great effect in aiding the *Alabama's* raid on commerce. It was not so much the vessels she actually destroyed as those she rendered

useless by the mere terror of her name, even when thousands of miles away. In his profoundly interesting account of the "Confederate Warfare against Commerce" in his work, "Ironclads in Action," Mr. H. W. Wilson tells us that "at Singapore Semmes found twenty American ships laid up, and there were numerous transfers of vessels in addition." To what flag strong enough to protect them could our merchantmen transfer if we were fighting a coalition against us?

Another point which I think Major Charles à Court does not take into account in estimating the sphere of action of a commerce destroyer, is that she is not entirely dependent on such coaling places under her own flag or those of her allies as would be open to her. She would unquestionably replenish her own coal bunkers from the bunkers of the steam merchantmen she captured. Like the wasp and the honey-laden bee, only the destroying wasp in this case would suck the honey first and kill the merchant bee after, just as the *Alabama*, for instance, took two prizes into the anchorage of Fernando de Noronha, coaled from them, and then burnt them. Nor can it

be doubted that the commander of a powerful French cruiser would hesitate for one moment about helping himself to coal in a weak neutral's port, as Semmes did; for, as Mr. Wilson points out, the only way to prevent belligerents from infringing neutrality is for the neutral to be strong enough to do so.

Again, I am not quite certain that the future commerce destroyer will be so absolutely dependent on steam, as Major à Court appears to infer. Is sail power to be entirely absent? \*

The Confederate cruiser *Shenandoah* was a "very fast vessel, fitted with a lifting propeller, and had good sail power. . . . Her destination was the whaling ground of the North Pacific Ocean. After taking in guns and stores off Madeira, she coaled at Melbourne. The war was over when she reached Behring's Sea, but before intelligence of that had reached her she had burnt a large number of whalers. She made for England *under sail*, traversing the whole distance of seventeen

\* Hanging on the wall before me, as I write, are pictures of Captain Mahan's cruiser, the *Chicago*, and our own famous cruiser the *Calliope*, both are full rigged for sailing.

thousand miles without speaking a single ship."

As regards our home ports being blockaded, I have never contemplated that as possible ; but it is no answer to the suggestion of a national reserve of wheat to say "since you admit there is no fear of blockade of our ports, there can be no fear that we cannot get our food supplies in," as I contend I have proved, over and over again, that it is not a question of getting it into this country through a blockade of our coasts. If we were fighting Russia and America, to mention only two countries who have fought us at the same time before, would they feed us as they do now ? Nobody can dream they would. Then why put up that phantom bogey of blockade ?

In addition to the actual number of commerce destroyers which we must be prepared for, we shall have to deal with those evolved by panic and rumour, worse almost than the *Alabamas* themselves. How long shall we be at war with any naval power before the slender wires now hanging between submerged alp and alp connecting us with our colonies and naval stations will be cut ? If their exact

path across the ocean is known, if we can send our cable ships, and lift and repair them in peace time, are we to suppose our enemies will leave them alone in war time? Surely our naval officers and men will have their hands full in our next real war. Will they fight the better, or the worse, for knowing that their nearest and dearest at home are threatened with famine, or are comparatively safe from it?

I say comparatively safe, because even thirty million pounds' worth of wheat stored in this kingdom will not prevent distress and want from being felt.

People say to me, "But thirty million pounds' worth of wheat! You must be mad—well, wrong." Am I? Listen to this from a British admiral. Admiral Francis A. Close, writing in the *Daily Graphic*.

Admiral Close was asked—

"With what object does the Navy League exist?"

"Its object," he said, "is to instruct the classes and the masses, to show them how pre-eminently all their interests, even the food they eat, are dependent on a strong navy, an invincible

navy. Heretofore the interests of the classes in the navy have been limited to granting any money the Government of the day asked for, the amount being guided not always by the exigencies of the service, but by their political interests; had the public possessed the naval knowledge we wish to teach them, they would never have allowed so great a danger as now exists. The nation has a lot to learn in naval matters, and a lot to forget, for up to date they have trusted and lived in the past victorious reputation of the navy, when we naval officers know that all things are changed. English pluck and superior seamanship, which won our victories in the past, are discounted by steam and machinery, and if we went to war to-morrow we could not man our ships without the assistance of the partially-trained men of the Naval Reserve."

"What is the most pressing danger?"

"Our precarious food supply. On the outbreak of war there must be a panic on the Corn Exchange, the poor man's loaf must go up to famine price, which means bread riots and revolution. The British public and those military authorities who are answerable for the defence and feeding of the army and nation believe that the navy will be able to protect the three millions sterling of food which comes to us every week in six hundred ships. Here crops up the ignorance of the public on naval matters, and the folly of militarymen undertaking the defence of a country with a maritime frontier without seeking naval

advice. The new Commander-in-Chief of the army was reported to say on a public platform that he believed our fast steamers could bring us all the food we wanted in time of war. Did he say this of himself, or did he seek the advice of naval officers on this, a purely naval question?"

This statement of Admiral Close clearly indicates that in his opinion our navy, strong as it is, would be unable to protect our food supply, and at the same time fight hostile navies.

Mr. James Lowther, in a letter to the *Times*, drew attention to the serious dangers inherent, in view of the dispute with America, on our absolute dependence upon foreign food supplies. He says—

“In 1894, the last year for which full official figures are available, the total consumption of wheat and wheat-flour in the United Kingdom amounted, in round figures, to twenty-seven million quarters, of which quantity only thirty per cent. was produced at home. Of the imports no less than fifty per cent. came from the United States alone, whilst close upon twenty per cent. was derived from other parts of the American continent. Moreover, if we examine the remaining sources of supply it will be found that upwards of nineteen and a half per cent. was obtained



from ports the only outlet for which is through the Dardanelles—a region by no means so free from the possibility of disturbing influences as to counterbalance the feeling of security resulting from a study of the figures already mentioned. This leaves only ten per cent. of the imports—equal to seven per cent. of our total consumption—to be added to the thirty per cent. grown at home, the two together providing only thirty-seven per cent. of the quantity actually consumed last year in this country. Even assuming, for the sake of argument, that we could eventually secure other sources of supply, what, meanwhile, would become of ‘the cheap loaf’?”

What we have to do, then, is to pay in advance for a sufficient food supply to last every town and village in the country for six months, or, better, twelve months.

What do we expect of our navy?

We expect that it will beat the strongest force that can be brought against it, and so protect us from invasion, and at the same time protect our commerce and food supplies.

Some of our best naval authorities tell us that it must be greatly strengthened in order to do this.

I think the most we can hope for is that it may be made strong enough to give us

time, *with a food reserve in this country*, to make good the first losses of battle, which our unrivalled resources for warship building would enable us to do far more quickly and effectively than our opponents.

To permanently keep our fleet at such a strength as would allow of its accomplishing to the full the tremendous task expected of it would be, I think, unnecessary, if not impossible—the burden would be too great. If relieved of the strain of preventing actual famine at home it would still have an enormous stream of commerce and food to protect.

But, as I have pointed out before, there are possible conditions which might result in famine which no strength of fleet could prevent—such as a war with Russia (when she would sell us not a grain of her corn), and a scarcity in America leaving her only sufficient for her own fifty millions.

It is most probable that our commerce would be greatly impeded and stopped for a time; but if we were victorious it would return to us, after the war, in greater volume than ever.

I mean that though the partial stoppage of

trade would be in any event most serious for the time, it could not be so serious as our being prevented from carrying on war, for the sole reason that millions in these islands were starving.

What we shall want, as I said in the *Nineteenth Century*, is not money, men, or ships, but *time*, to gradually make ourselves to a great extent independent of foreign food supplies by growing them at home. The very day that war was declared, all who could do so would begin to produce food—but you cannot make corn, or cattle, or vegetables grow faster in war time than in peace time—then why not always keep in the country just enough wheat to exist on until we could grow enough food ?

We keep reserves of gold, of ships, guns, ammunition, soldiers, sailors, and water ; and yet of the thing which is most vital of all, and most quickly consumed, we have no reserve at all.

I firmly believe that, apart from any other consideration whatever, the annual cost of keeping such a reserve of food would be returned to us tenfold or a hundredfold by the

sense of security it would give us, and the feeling of insecurity it would give other nations, they,—when thinking of attacking us,—plainly say that their only chance is to starve us into submission. And what would submission under such terms mean? Why, that our colonies and dependencies would have to make the best terms they could, and we should be what we made Holland—once our greatest rival.

People say to me, “Oh, it is all very well, but what about our colonies, and India, and Canada, would they not feed us?”—a glance at the diagram prefixed to this volume gives the answer. Even if they could in war time send us all the food they now do (which would be impossible), what is it compared with the supply from the great wheat and other grain-producing countries?

Our colonies would certainly strain every nerve to help us, the sentiment which makes them proud of being part of the British empire is immensely strong, but their knowledge that they are *not yet* like America, strong enough to stand alone against the great nations of the earth, is a yet stronger motive, the instinct of

self-preservation, the first law of nature, tells them *our* defeat would be *theirs*.

But our colonies are scattered over the globe at immense distances from our shores. With the Suez Canal closed, and all the trade routes threatened, it must be many months before they could effectually help us. Remember the disappointment of the Australian contingent at being too late to join in the success of our troops in Egypt!

The colonies, and India, and Canada would come to our assistance, but they must have time.

It is, then, our manifest duty to them, as well as to ourselves, not to throw away the certainty of eventual victory of the empire throughout its length and breadth, through failing to provide for probable famine in these islands.

I heartily admire and fully sympathize with the critic who says to me, "You are right as regards the danger; but the only way to get over it is to still further strengthen our fleet." And my suggestion would mean *enormously* strengthening our war fleet, because it would add to it, as a *fighting* power, every battleship

and cruiser it relieved from the work of food supply protection. It is not as if our most vital supply—that of bread—was the only supply our fleet is expected to protect ; there is the equally vast supply of grain other than wheat, which we want for our live stock ; and beyond that the enormous ebb and flow of our trade generally. No officer in our navy who has studied the question will deny that the provisioning of these islands with one year's bread, as I propose, will still leave the fleet enough to do, with a hundred and twenty millions sterling of other food, and five hundred and fifty millions sterling of other trade, export and import, to protect !

I can imagine the feelings of an English admiral leaving Spithead with a strong fleet of our best ships a short time after the declaration of war by a powerful European combination against us. At the moment of weighing anchor he gets his latest orders from the Admiralty and a copy of the extra special edition of the *Standard*. What will weigh most on his mind, the order from the Admiralty to proceed with all speed to engage an enemy's fleet somewhere, or the cry of the

nation in the *Standard* to protect our food supply, with "Enormous Rise in the Price of Bread" staring at him in big type ?

We know he would obey orders as a British admiral, and fight as one ; but we know that as an Englishman he would be wondering while he was fighting what was happening at home. And as the weeks and months went on, his anxiety would increase. He might be more than holding his own in the duty assigned to him, but still as he paced his quarter-deck there would continually come to him that awful question, "How are they getting on in England ?" And then, on the eve of another Trafalgar, he might learn from another defeated Villeneuve that his victory was in vain ; the war was at an end ; famine at home had forced surrender.

On the other hand, if he read in his *Standard* as he left Spithead that the nation was confident, with a year's supply of bread in the country, and abundant time, *with that supply*, to grow all it required, he would go to battle with as light a heart on *that score*, and as much determination to win, as any British admiral in our long line of naval heroes ever

did before. And that confidence would not be his only, it would be shared by every officer and man in his fleet, and not by them only, but by all our fleets and the whole nation. With a year's bread safe, we could turn our attention to doubling and trebling our fleet, as well as doubling and trebling our harvest of all kinds. And if it is advanced that we have not the trained men to man that extra fleet, I say neither have other nations, and that we have in our fishing fleet and merchant service a far better reserve to fall back on than any other nation can boast. I do not mean, all the same, that this is the trained reserve I should like to see.

I never have seen, never expect to see, never wish to see, a more inspiring sight than a British man-of-war.

Lounging away a summer's day somewhere on our sea-girt coast, you see a little speck away on the horizon; presently you notice a movement in the knot of sailors sitting about on the jetty below; one of them fetches an old battered telescope from his locker; a long careful scrutiny, and he shuts it up



without saying a word. You know it is only a liner. Another similar day, and the same scene repeats itself, only the telescope is not shut up; it passes from hand to hand. Visitors begin to get interested. "What is she?" Man-o'-war, sir. Then, up on the white cliff above, you see the coastguard with his telescope to his eye and a little knot of visitors round *him*, and you know he is answering the same question in the same way. Everybody in the place seems to—nay, does—feel an absorbing interest in that growing speck on the horizon, and we all go to bed, perhaps dreaming of Nelson and all his name means to us.

Even the British servant at the seaside lodging-house shares the infection. Why should she not, when probably her brother, or her sweetheart, serves the Queen at sea? Hot water, sir; beg pardon, sir, but the *Victoria* and the *Anson* and the *Collingwood* are anchored out in front—leastways, that is what they say." "They" being the boatmen who have come to see if we are ready for a day's sea-fishing.

And sure enough, lying a few cables out at

sea, are the three British warships named.\* Three bits of England afloat. Thank God, *they* are not “made in Germany”!—though they make ironclads uncommonly well there now.

And can an English eye rest on any finer or more significant sight than those floating bits of England yonder, dug out of her bowels, manned by her free men? A British man-of-war is an epitome of the British nation. That flag, lazily flapping in the breeze, has dyed with its colours every page of our history, on sea or land, all the world over. And what do those men-of-war riding at anchor, and that blood-red flag represent? Simply the power of England; nothing more. Is there anything more powerful? Nothing but the black, shrunken, shrivelled, gaunt flag of “Famine,”—where that flies long enough and strong enough all others fall before it.

I have been called a “panic-monger” for endeavouring to call attention to this flag. As well call the extra doors for escape from

\* This is a fact. And I shall never forget, when at Deal some years later, the horror with which that town heard of the fate of the *Victoria*. Many Deal men went down in her.

fire at a theatre "panic-monger doors," when their sole object, as is mine, is to prevent panic.

I hope I may be forgiven this digression, but I cannot forget that some of those whose opinions I most value have inferred, as one said, "You are dragging a red herring across the scent of those of us who want to increase our sea power." If I was convinced of that, I would burn these pages rather than publish them. But I am not convinced of it. I am, the more I think of it, convinced that to have only one year's loaf in this country to live on while we are fighting any combination against us, is the only way to convert the terribly uncertain question, "Can we get food in?" into the certain answer, "*We have got it in.*"

## CHAPTER V.

## “ A MENACE TO THE WORLD ! ”

ONE of my critics says that for this country to establish a reserve of food for the people would be a “ menace to the world.”

If this is true, no stronger testimony to the necessity of the reserve could possibly be forthcoming.

Is it likely any nation would say it was contrary, for instance, to international law, or an infringement of the Monroe doctrine, for this country to do what all the world does to insure against “ accidents ” ?

Should we care if they did so ?

We have been menaced before and shall be again ; but menaces do not break bones.

For the last twelve months the world has been full of rumours of alliances, of new “ secret treaties,” and of exposures of old ones.

Without pretending to any political foresight, there is one possible and immensely formidable combination against us, and that is Germany, France, and Russia.

Prince Bismarck said—

"A wise policy must, therefore, take care  
 "that we (the Triple Alliance) hold aloof from  
 "England's conflict with France and Russia,  
 "who will not seek war with us, when fighting  
 "England in three continents, and that we  
 "should reserve our strength in order to be  
 "able to throw it into the scale when things  
 "come to be rearranged.

"But the British are tormented by another  
 "anxiety. They no longer believe in the un-  
 "assailability of their European Island Empire.  
 "... Add to this that her insular position  
 "involves the danger of England being starved  
 "out."—See Appendix "*Prince Bismarck and the  
 Position of England.*"

It will be said at once that as long as Germany holds two of France's fairest provinces, there is no chance of their becoming allies in war. Granted, for *as long*. But suppose Germany, as the price of French alliance, gave her back her provinces? Compare their value to Germany, and the tremendous cost at which she holds them. The

cost of perpetual fear of war. It is possible that could Germany have foreseen that the France she so defeated and humbled in the dust of her empire, in the war of 1870-71, would within a few years rise Phoenix-like from her ashes, more formidable than at any time since the first Napoleon—it is possible, I think, she might have despaired at the task of for ever keeping an alien population subject to her iron rule.

Equally astonishing as the revival of the powers of France, and of far more importance to us, has been the expansion of Germany's foreign trade during the same period. Every succeeding year of her increasing commercial and colonial competition with us makes her feel more the burden of the terms on which she lives with France. The German Emperor's telegram to President Krüger was resented by us so keenly because we knew it was the passionate expression of Germany's feeling towards us. In plain English it said, "Hands off, you world-grabbing Britishers, the German eagle wants to pick a living in Africa, if only in the deserts and swamps you sneer at having left us!"

And if the German eagle flapped its wings at us so helplessly, it was because it was tied by the leg to its bone of contention with France.

When Germany and France together cried "Hands off!" to us over the Congo Convention we—took them off.

It may not be to our liking that the new German Empire is becoming, if it has not become, a world power as well as a continental power, but it is a fact. The day may be nearer than we imagine, if we imagine it at all, when the German Eagle will drop the burden which so taxes it to hold, and thus free itself from the ever present risk of a most doubtful war with France, and thus gain her goodwill in the struggle against British commerce and colonial enterprise.

For the reasons, and I venture to think good reasons, I have given, it is not so unlikely as some people imagine that we should find ourselves not merely menaced, but attacked, by the three great Northern Powers, while Germany's influence and alliance with Austria would ensure Italy's neutrality.

If they selected a time when a deficient

harvest in America left little or no surplus for us (as is the case in India at this moment), we should, if we had, as we have now, *no reserve to fall back on*, we should inevitably be forced by famine to go under.

If, on the other hand, we *had* this reserve, a few months might show the whole English-speaking race in arms together.

If it became evident that our sea power was unequal, as I do not believe for one moment it would be, to the struggle, America would be compelled to join us; compelled by the ties of blood and by the even stronger ties of self-interest. She could never stand by and see the whole volume of her enormous trade with our free ports, threatened with extinction by a prohibitive tariff imposed by the continental powers.

Mr. W. T. Stead, to whom we all owe so much for his advocacy, especially when he controlled the *Pall Mall Gazette*, of a strong navy, wrote to me as follows :—

“DEAR MR. MARSTON,

“I have read your article with interest, and noticed it briefly in the *Review of Reviews*. I am not able to agree with you. It seems to me that



not all the combined navies in the world could blockade our ports so as to render it impossible for us to lose the supply of food which we need. The price would go up, no doubt, but all the United States Navy concentrated upon Wilmington failed to prevent the blockade runners getting in and out, and it is impossible to imagine any similar concentration of naval strength opposite to British ports. The increase of price, which, no doubt, would be serious, would operate as an enormous premium on running the blockade.

"Yours sincerely,

"W. T. STEAD."

No Englishman has the interests of our country nearer his heart than Mr. Stead.

But, unless I am utterly and hopelessly wrong, where does any question of blockade come in?

At the present time, and for many years past, we are and have been living on bread—not, certainly, "made in Russia and the United States," but grown there, which is much the same thing, I presume. It is made here chiefly by Germans.

If we were at war with Russia and America, or if Mr. Stead will not admit that as possible, if we were at war with Russia and France and

the American wheat crop was insufficient for export (such a disaster would be their opportunity), could our fleet or any fleet compel them to send our usual supplies when they knew that the want of food was far more vital to us than any injury they could inflict on our fleet. They would sell us nothing until we had beaten them, and that might take twelve months, if we ever did it. They are self-supporting; we depend on them for our bread.

Mr. Stead quotes Wilmington and the success of our blockade runners. Yes, but our swift blockade runners had a friendly goal in view. Our enemies would not be blockading us and at the same time running supplies through the blockade. If there was a ghost of a chance of getting as much more from other countries as Russia and America send us, in addition to what those other countries now send, the case would be different. But is there? Turn to the diagram at the beginning of this little book, strike out Russia and America's supplies, and think of them as opposing with all their power with countless Alabamas, real and imaginary, our import from those "other sources of supply."

Surely the first thing they would do, as far as they were able, would be to make wheat and food of all kinds destined for us contraband of war.

France, when at war with China, threatened to make rice contraband of war, and nothing but our intervention prevented her. Would Russia at war with us allow any of the Baltic States to send us food?

## CHAPTER VI.

“ONLY A PRECARIOUS WEEK’S SUPPLY OF FOOD.”

MR. W. E. BEAR, the eminent agricultural authority, writing in the *National Review* for March, 1896, says—

“Mr. Marston labours under the astounding delusion that we have ‘only a precarious week’s supply’ of food in this country.”

And then Mr. Bear himself admits that at certain times of the year the utmost actually in the country is “equal to about nine weeks’ consumption.”

Experts differ so, that it is difficult to know exactly what supply we *have* in the country. (See letter signed “Mark Lane,” p. 58.) At any rate the great mistake is made by Mr. Bear and others, of calculating that even a three months’ normal supply of wheat in peace time would last even three weeks in

war time. The price would at once put bread out of the reach of millions of our people, and that means—starvation and rebellion.

It seems to me that in the following words Mr. Bear gives his whole case away and establishes mine. He says—

"AS A SAFEGUARD, AT THE OUTSET OF HOSTILITIES, we should have purchased enough grain of other kinds than wheat to make up a whole year's consumption with what we produce at home."

How *could* we purchase this enormous supply at the outset of hostilities? Where could we purchase it? Not from the great corn producing countries we are about to fight, and even supposing an impossibility, viz. that we could purchase it from neutrals, could not our enemies purchase it also? Their first act of hostility might have been to purchase it before we did.

I say we could and should purchase it, and that quietly and gradually in peace time, and at peace prices, instead of putting it off until it would be no longer possible to get it, or any "other grain" to replace it.

Mr. Bear appears entirely to forget that we already buy almost if not quite as much

“other grain,” viz. foreign barley, oats, maize, peas, beans, etc., as we do wheat, and that Russia and the United States again supply the bulk of it; and if they were at war with us it would be impossible to make up the deficiency.

It will be seen that Mr. Bear is of opinion that we could “at the outset of hostilities,” that is, when every corn-market in the world would be in a state of wild confusion, purchase and safely get into this country a year’s supply of grain of “other kinds than wheat,” *as a safeguard*.

He thus admits the necessity of a safeguard—only he thinks it could be provided at a moment’s notice, even at the moment of “war with Great Britain” being declared; while I think it would take at least five years of peace to provide this safeguard, so tremendous is the mass of it, so enormous the distances it has to come.

Mr. Bear’s argument involves this further impossibility, viz. that, supposing “other grain than wheat” existed somewhere abroad at the outset of hostilities, we could transport to our shores in a few weeks in war time

such an amount of it as it requires a whole year to transport in peace time.

Mr. Bear's article in the *National Review* was thus referred to by the *St. James's Gazette* :—

"Lord Wolseley's recent assertion that there was nothing to fear as to our food supply in war time is backed up by Mr. W. E. Bear's paper on that subject. In the *National Review* Mr. Bear points out that, of course, a combination of the whole world against Britain could starve us out in six months; but then the same combination would before that time have forced us to accept defeat, so that the possibility of starvation would not arise. If on the other hand America and Russia declared war against us, we could still get wheat from neutral countries."

In reply I would like to point out that, in my opinion—

1. Not many subjects of the British Empire, I hope, take it *for granted* as Mr. Bear does that the whole world could defeat us, even if it were ever likely so to be united against us.

2. That a supply of wheat equal to that we get from Russia and America, or *anything approaching it*, never exists in neutral countries, and that it would be very difficult to get in war time even what they now send us.

3. That if we had enough bread in the shape of corn stored in the country to *give our farmers time* to sow and grow corn, cereals of all kinds, vegetables of all kinds, and breed live stock, we need not even fear that the world could starve us.

Lord Wolseley is said to have stated in reply to Admiral Close's suggestion of corn stores, that he did not know whether we had nine months' or three months' supply, but that it did not matter as our coast was so indented it could never be blockaded, etc.

The *Daily News*, referring to Lord Wolseley's remarks, said that his lordship had "laid low another bogey" in his criticism of Admiral Close's suggestion of corn stores. To which I replied, as follows, in the *Daily News* of March 11, 1896.

"At the risk of being considered a 'panic-monger and protectionist,' as you term those who venture to think that it is wiser to prepare quietly in peace time for dearth and scarcity in war time, I should like to point out that if Lord Wolseley, as you say, 'laid low another bogey' in his criticism of Admiral Close's suggestion of corn stores, that bogey was, with all respect, one of his own creation. No sane Englishman imagines that there is any danger



of an enemy blockading our ports ; but I know many sane Englishmen, both in the army and navy and elsewhere, who wonder how we shall get our daily bread if at war with Russia and the United States, seeing that they between them supply nearly all we get from abroad. . . . How could we, at war with Russia and America, force them to sell us their corn, or, failing that, get it anywhere else, when it exists nowhere else ?"

Can any one imagine that war between us and Russia and America is impossible ? Or that the partial failure of the American wheat crop, and war with Russia at the same time (and possibly as an outcome of that failure), is impossible ?

By far the strongest argument against the establishment of a year's supply, or any supply of wheat as a reserve in this country, is that it might lull us to sleep and dull the edge of our defence ; but I think the risk of that is far less than the risk we now run of being caught napping with an empty larder. Napoleon said that armies go on their bellies. If he were alive now, and again thinking of invading us, he would agree with his countrymen of to-day, that to stop our food was the only way to bring us down. Fortunately for

us, when he lived, we grew as well as made our bread at home.

I do not of course claim to be an authority on naval or military matters, but if I had done nothing more than read my daily paper, I should know that the chief hope of those nations which are so unceasingly adding to their war fleets is to starve us. It was Napoleon's one great object, and it is the great object of all our possible enemies to-day. Admiral Fournier says plainly that France's only hope of beating us is by destroying, not our battleships but our mail steamers, not our cruisers but our sailing ships—in fact, to use his words, to “destroy their commerce, strike at their very life.”

I could fill pages with extracts from the writings of foreign naval officers, who, like the honest broker Bismarck, hope to famish us, *sanguiner à blanc*, to use his favourite expression. Here, for instance, as I send these pages to press, I find in the February 6th number of the *Journal de la Marine, Le Yacht*, an admirable French naval weekly, that one of the best French naval officers and writers living, Emile Duboc, says:—“Pour

édifier un programme de constructions neuves, il faut avoir toujours présente à l'esprit l'idée maîtresse qui se dégage du remarquable rapport de M. de Kerjégu : que la guerre de course, est la seule efficace *et la seule possible* contre l'Angleterre."

It is perfectly certain, and none know the fact better than our most trusted and experienced naval officers, that in our next great naval war our mercantile marine must suffer tremendous losses, and must be an enormous tax on our war fleet in affording such protection as may be possible to that enormous stream of food which, quite apart from our supply of foreign wheat, we get from abroad.

I can assure Mr. Bear that I have the interests of the British farmer quite as much at heart as he has, and that no one more earnestly hopes that he is right and I am wrong than I do.

I think I may assume that Mr. Bear agrees with me that we require a safeguard; and I am very glad indeed to be able to quote his authority for the statement that we *could* grow in this country the wheat we now import.

He says in the article from which I have just quoted—

“We could easily grow all the wheat we required in such an emergency, as seven million acres, in addition to the exceptionally small area cropped with wheat last year, would suffice to produce the necessary quantity. . . . The prospect of high prices would induce farmers to plough up millions of acres of temporary and comparatively new permanent pasture for the purpose of growing wheat.”

I am delighted to hear from Mr. Bear that we could “easily grow the wheat,” as that has been the chief difficulty I foresee in my suggestion. I am afraid it would not be “easily” done; but, of course, we should be growing *also* every other kind of farm and dairy produce in enormously increased quantities.

But it could not be done if we have no reserve of wheat in the country; first, because seed corn to sow seven million acres with would be wanting; secondly, because our farmers would never undertake such a gigantic speculation with the knowledge that, before the wheat was in the ear, peace or our defeat through famine might make it valueless.

Mr. Bear will say, "But if your argument cuts down my emergency crop before it is sown, surely it cuts down yours?"

No; the main object of my whole scheme of having thirty million pounds' worth of wheat stored, and under government charge and control, is to provide our British and Irish farmers with that security for enormously increasing their crops, without which no sane men would or could undertake such a venture.

It will be said that in the face of such a national danger it would be the duty of the Government, *i.e.* the people, to guarantee the farmers, and lend the money necessary for producing the extra crops.

Granted, and the contract would read something like this—

*"I, Alfred Balfour, First Lord of the Treasury, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, undertake to buy from the farmers of the United Kingdom, twenty-five million quarters of wheat, or less, to be grown by them in addition to the average annual crop; and in view of the fact that this country is now at war with countries which feed us in peace time, and that our most sanguine authorities estimate that the wheat in the country*

*will only last three months, Her Majesty's Government offer the price of £10 per quarter for all wheat sown, grown, harvested and delivered within the next three months—time to be the essence of the contract."*

Well, what would our farmers say to such a splendid offer? Why, they would say, if you asked the country to grow you an emergency crop of war ships in three months it would be done. But if the Government offered all the money in the empire they could not make one extra grain of corn ripen sooner than Nature made it ripen; and that if war broke out in early summer it would take fifteen or sixteen months, and if it broke out in early spring it would take at least six months, to produce an addition to the annual crop, and even that is supposing the land was prepared for it, which it certainly would not be.

Mr. Balfour, or any other British minister who happened to be in power at such a crisis—I wish I could think impossible crisis in our history—would of course attach no such impossible condition to his offer to our farmers.

But suppose for a moment *some* such reserve as that I and others advocate had been established, he would then be able to say to our farmers, "We are engaged in a tremendous war, we trust our arms will eventually be victorious, we none of us know how long the war may last, but we have in our State granaries distributed all over these islands, thirty million pounds' worth of wheat bought by this country at peace prices, we intend, when necessary, to sell this wheat to the corn-merchants under such conditions as will compel them to be content with a fixed profit, and at such a price as will compel the people to use it without waste. The price we shall get will be at least double that we paid for it. We must replenish our State granaries, and with the sixty millions sterling which the public will have paid for the State corn to prevent famine, we have a fund at our disposal which will enable us to guarantee to you farmers full payment for producing the wheat necessary to replenish our granaries in place of the usual supply from abroad. We are thus able not merely to guarantee you payment, but, what is of infinitely greater importance, we can

*give you time*, to grow this additional wheat supply."

But my farmer friends say to me, and I have before me a letter from a well-known corn-merchant (a Liberal of the Liberals, and a Free-trader of the Free-traders, that is, up to within the last few years) which says to me—well, I hesitate to mention the remedy proposed, for fear my reader should throw down this book and cry, as some of my critics did in reviewing my paper in the *Nineteenth Century*, "Protection."

If mere trade protection was all I had in view, I should never have troubled my head about the matter. That we put our *money* on the right horse when, as a nation, we backed Free Trade, the tremendous money results amply prove; whether we have or have not ridden that hobby too far in the interests of the backbone of the country, agriculture, I am not competent to judge.

But this I can say, no Englishman, Welshman, Scotchman, or Irishman, who has travelled over these islands as I have, can have failed to see, and, whatever his political convictions may be, deplore the tremendous



change for the worse, which has come over the farming interest during the past twenty—ay, ten years.

Here is the simple remedy which as honest and as hardworking an English farmer as ever lived, a man I have known for nearly forty years, asks me to advocate. "Put such a duty on foreign *wheat only* as will enable British farmers to sell wheat at 40s. the quarter, and bread will be no dearer, and we will grow all you want." But I can only tell him that to advocate trade protection is to talk to the winds, and that the only protection I can advocate is against a famine which may cripple not only agriculture, but our whole nation.

Mr. Bear puts the annual cost of keeping a year's supply of corn in this country at £8,000,000. This is more than twice as much as the *Standard*, in criticizing my proposal, said it would cost.

Why should it cost the British Government, doing the work on such a large scale, with full command of time and labour-saving appliances, more than twice as much per annum to store corn, as it now actually costs a private corn-merchant?

I have it from one of the highest authorities in the corn trade that to keep foreign corn in the granaries at Liverpool, Bristol, etc., for one year costs for the labour of cleaning and turning it and for interest on the money invested in it, 3s. per quarter of corn per annum.

Our present annual import of foreign wheat is about twenty-five million quarters, and in my article in the *Nineteenth Century*, in order to be on the safe side, I assumed that we should have to pay about £30,000,000 for it. This I have very good grounds for believing to be many millions in excess of the actual cost, if the corn is purchased, as I suggested it should be, by Government agents abroad, by advance orders at a fixed price, such orders to extend over five years. It would be folly to attempt to purchase such enormous supplies of corn either all at once or secretly. No, we should do exactly as we do when we want to add £30,000,000 of ironclads to our navy during a period of so many years. We should announce to the world the fact that as a nation of shopkeepers we had come to the conclusion that it was very unbusinesslike

to keep our most vital reserves of food in Russia and the United States; that without for a moment suggesting that those countries or any others would dream of attacking us, still we thought it was better to have the reserve under our own control; that, quite apart from thoughts of war, it was just possible that failure of our corn supplies might be caused by failure of the foreign crops themselves.

Instead of costing the country £8,000,000, as Mr. Bear says, or nearer £4,000,000, as the *Standard* says, or about £2,000,000, as I have said, I firmly believe it would, even in peace time, save the country millions a year indirectly by the confidence its mere existence would give us; and even in peace time it would ever and at all times make those who contemplate attacking us think three times, viz. (1) as to whether they could beat us on the sea; (2) failing that, whether they could starve us; (3) that, as there was no prospect of doing either one or the other, they would attempt neither.

I think the country owes a great debt of gratitude to those naval officers who, at the

risk of being called all sorts of names, such as panic-mongers, faddists, and protectionists, dare to tell their countrymen that the task expected of them is more than even the British fleet can be expected to do. Fight any foe or combination of foes we know they will, as of yore; conduct in safety to our ports hundreds of merchantmen we know they will, as of yore; but *compel* such countries as America and Russia to continue to feed us when at war with them, we know they can not.

If only our people could realize that, although our annual foreign bread bill is only about a fifth part of our foreign food bill in money value, it is *infinitely more important* than all the rest of the supply put together by reason of its immense comparative bulk and immense comparative cheapness and life-sustaining value. This will be seen in a moment by glancing at any table of statistics of quantity and value of imported food stuffs.

From January to June 30th, 1894, we imported over forty-two million hundred-weights of wheat, in corn or as flour, valued at over thirteen millions sterling; and the

remainder of the cereals amount to another £10,000,000 for the half-year. Look down the list for the next big total in money value, and we find it is about ten and a half million sterling for the half-year for sugar weighing about fourteen and a half million hundred-weights.

So that, roughly, a million tons of sugar, which we could exist without, costs roughly as much as three million tons of wheat, which we could not exist without. The next item is butter, of which we buy only one and a half million hundredweights, at a cost of £7,000,000. So that the foreign butter for our foreign bread, although it costs more than half as much as our bread, weighs less than the thirtieth part of it, and is made in countries only a few miles from our shores, instead of being grown thousands of miles away as the corn is.

In other words, whereas about thirty-five merchant vessels, capable of carrying two thousand tons of butter, could carry our January to June six months' supply from the Continent, it would require one thousand vessels, each capable of carrying two thousand

tons, to bring over from countries thousands of miles away our January to June supply of wheat for 1894, and the last half of the year, being the harvest half, is much heavier, of course.

Unfortunately, I have not available statistics of the imports of wheat and butter for the latter half of 1894.

It will be seen, then, that, valuable as are our imports of other food, they are insignificant as compared with our imported loaf. It would be very unpleasant to have no foreign butter or sugar, but it would not mean starvation, and if we were not at war with France and Germany they would come in all right.

I am not a pessimist, I have the most absolute confidence in the power and will of our people to hold their own against the world if necessary. I believe in our *women*. If you want to know the real strength and lasting power of a people look at their women, and where will you match ours? For mothers, wives, daughters, what nation can match ours? And as long as that is so we need have no fear when the sons of our

British mothers go out on sea or land to uphold the honour and the glory of the British race.

But the question of fighting seems to me to be quite a secondary one; we *know* we shall do that, we may even look calmly on the possibility of some improbable disasters to our arms in our next great war. But what fills me with dread is that no war fleet we could ever send from our shores could compel the nations which now feed us to do so against their will; and if that is true, how can we expect our millions will quietly die of starvation? Our home army, regulars, militia, volunteers, and police would be utterly swamped in the cry for bread; they would join in the cry, and then our Government would be face to face with the greatest question any Government ever had before it, viz. whether they could feed the nation or not! If not, then it would be simply a question of how far we should have to sink in the scale of nations, to what terms we should have to submit, and who can say what they would be?

And yet it seems to me that if we had

only one year's supply of bread in this country, we could laugh at anything men of other nations could threaten us with. The genius of our people for war, proven any time these last thousand years nearly, would awaken again. As Campbell sang :—

“ Ye Mariners of England ! that guard our native seas ;  
 Whose flag has braved a thousand years the battle and  
 the breeze !  
 Your glorious standard launch again to match another  
 foe !  
 And sweep through the deep, while the stormy winds do  
 blow ;  
 While the battle rages loud and long, and the stormy  
 winds do blow.

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“ *The spirits of your fathers shall start from every wave.* ”



## CHAPTER VII.

HOW WE KEEP FROM THREE TO FOUR YEARS'  
SUPPLY OF CORN AT MALTA.

IN the course of a conversation I had last year with Sir Edward Birkbeck on the question of our food supply—the importance of which he said it was impossible to exaggerate—he asked me, as I had referred, in the *Nineteenth Century*, to our provisioning Gibraltar for two years, if I had ever seen the great corn stores we keep at Malta. I have not done so, and it occurred to me it would be very interesting to have some information about them for this book; so I wrote to a correspondent at Malta, Mr. John Critien, who very kindly gave me the following account of the “silos,” and the accompanying illustrations, with permission to publish them.

I wish to make it quite clear, however,

that in the plan for forming a reserve of corn in this country, which I advocate, I do *not* propose that it should be stored for *more* than one year. To do that would upset the whole plan I suggest, which is—

The gradual collection of an amount equal to one year's import, and its automatic renewal by exchanging it for the new corn as it arrives at the different ports.

It is, nevertheless, both interesting and useful to know that even in a small sea-girt island like Malta, corn can be kept, and, as a matter of fact, is kept good, for as long a time as four years, and is circumstantial evidence of the truth of the Biblical statement that Joseph, in the dry climate of Egypt, fed the people with corn stored for seven years.

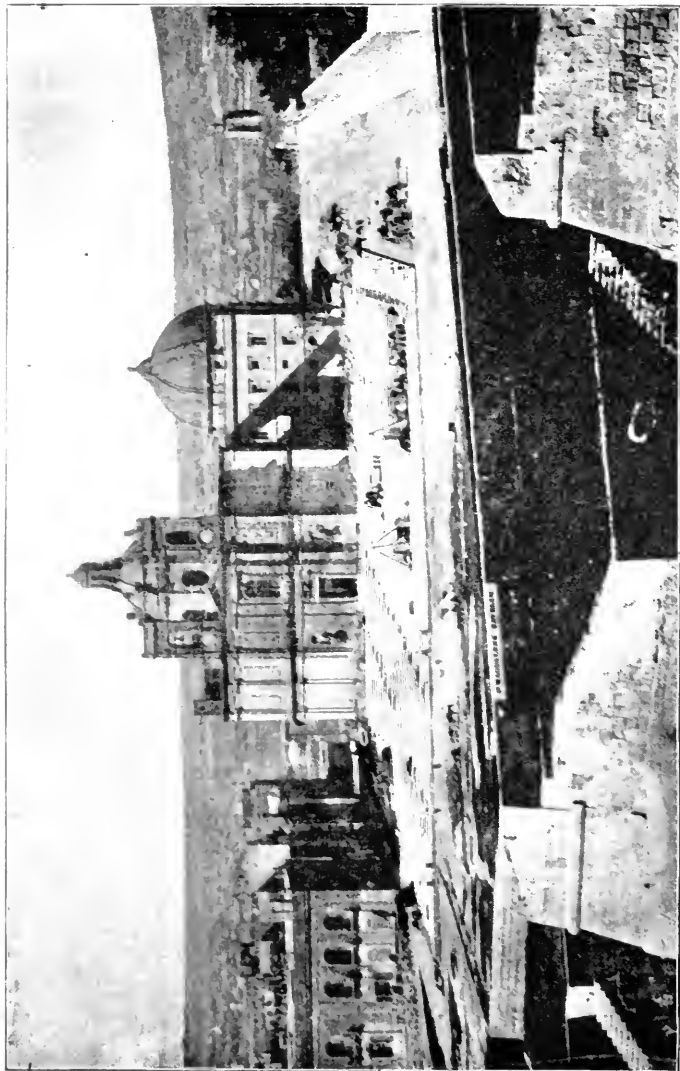
#### DESCRIPTION OF THE CORN SILOS AT MALTA.

“Malta, May 14, 1896.

“To R. B. Marston, Esq., London.

“DEAR SIR,

“Agreeable to my promise I have great  
 “pleasure now in giving you the information  
 “regarding the Malta corn stores, or, as they are



THE CHURCH OF ST. PUBLIUS, VALLETTA, MALTA, SHOWING IN THE SQUARE IN FRONT THE TOWS OF THE SILOS, CALLED THE FLORIANA GRANARIES.



“called here, ‘silos.’ By the same mail you  
“will receive a photograph showing the exterior  
“tops of the silos in rows—they are built in this  
“way in groups in different parts of the town  
“and suburbs.

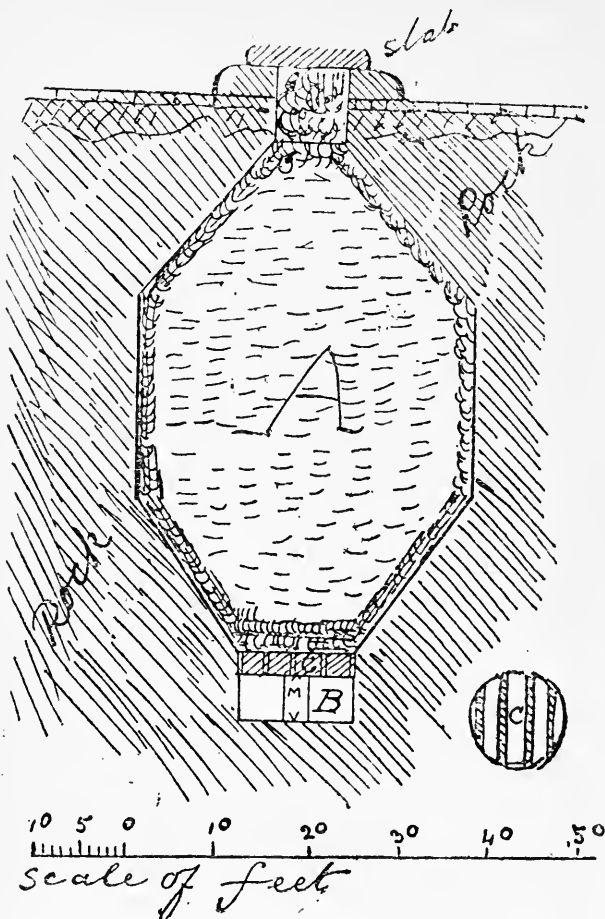
“There are several hundreds of these silos in  
“Malta, and, as you will see from the enclosed  
“sketch of a section of one of them, they are  
“dug in the rock, and are all more or less of the  
“same shape.

“The walls of the silo are carefully cemented  
“to keep out the moisture of the rock. The  
“bottom, ‘B’ (see sketch), is closed up by the  
“slabs ‘C,’ which are placed a few inches apart  
“from each other, to allow any exudation from  
“the walls of the upper part to pass through, and  
“thus prevent its being absorbed by the grain.

“When grain is deposited in a silo, a layer of  
“barley straw of the thickness of a sheaf is  
“placed all round the walls, and a thicker layer  
“at the bottom. This is done to prevent absorp-  
“tion of moisture by the grain, which would  
“make it ferment.

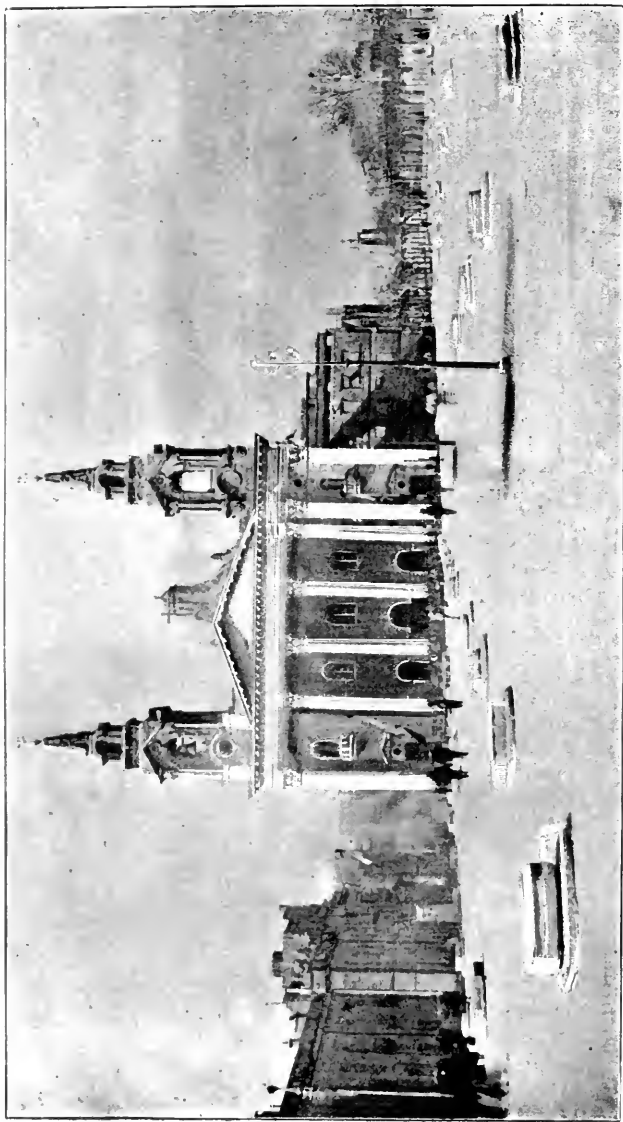
“It is of paramount importance that the silo  
“be perfectly dry, as otherwise there will be  
“fermentation.

“When filled up with grain more straw is  
“packed in on the top of it, so as to fill up  
“the silo, and the top slab is then put on and  
“hermetically sealed.



SECTION OF A ROCK CORN "SILO," OR STORE, AT MALTA.

(Will keep from three hundred to four hundred quarters of wheat, i.e. from sixty to eighty tons, in good condition for four years or more.)



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE CHURCH OF ST. PUBLIUS, VALLETTA, BUT TAKEN AFTER THE FACADE HAD BEEN RESTORED.  
IT GIVES A CLOSER VIEW OF THE TOWERS OF THE CORN SILOS.





“Grain stored in these silos will keep good for  
“a very long time. The surface of the ground  
“in which they are built is paved carefully, so  
“as to prevent rain-water filtering through the  
“rock.

“The shape of the silos is conico-cylindrical,  
“and their capacity varies from three hundred  
“to four hundred quarters each, and, as already  
“stated, there are many hundreds of them in  
“Malta.

“The straw used for packing round the grain  
“must be barley straw.

“If there are any further particulars you  
“require, I shall be glad to get them for you.

“Yours faithfully,

“JOHN CRITIEN.”

This was to me—having, as my wife says,  
“corn on the brain”—very interesting in-  
formation; and Mr. Critien kindly gave me  
some more in reply to further questions I  
put to him.

“Malta, May 31, 1896.

“To R. B. Marston, Esq., London.

“DEAR SIR,

“I am in receipt of your favour of the  
“20th, and I am glad that I have so far satisfied  
“you with the information I have given you  
“about the Malta silos.

“As regards the other points you mention, I have consulted a leading corn-merchant I know, and I am now in a position to answer them.

“1st. As to the number of years corn keeps good in these silos.

“Corn keeps good in the silos on an average from *three* to *four* years, provided, however, (1) that the silos are not defective, for sometimes a particular silo may be too warm, which would cause the corn to ferment. (2) Provided that the corn is dry at the time of storing, for if damp it will not keep.

“As a precaution, they make it a rule to inspect it from time to time. This is done by means of an instrument consisting of a specially-contrived conical metal cup attached to a long pole. This is thrust down in the mass of grain, and when it reaches the bottom it opens, and is filled up. From the sample it brings up they can judge of the condition of the grain. If it is found to be in incipient fermentation, the contents of the silo are taken out and deposited in a layer about a foot or two deep in well-ventilated store-rooms until the grain is cured, and it is then replaced in the silo.

“If the corn is found in good condition, it is let alone. These inspections are made every two or three months.

“In reply to your second question, ‘How is the corn renewed?’

“As the corn is placed in these silos for storing

“until it is required for use or is sold, there is  
“no occasion for renewing it. But it is evident  
“from the explanations given above, that fresh  
“corn can be added to any stored up at any  
“time.

“If you are going to publish a monograph on  
this subject, viz. ‘Storage of Corn,’ I shall be  
glad to have a copy of it when published.

“Yours faithfully,

“JOHN CRITIEN.”

I am glad to acknowledge my indebtedness  
to Mr. Critien for so kindly answering my  
questions.

It may occur to some of my readers to  
say, “Why publish one of the most vital  
details in the defence of Malta?” A glance  
at the accompanying illustrations shows  
clearly enough that there can be no possible  
secrecy about it. Any foreign officer who  
visits Malta could not help seeing the corn  
silos unless he was blind, and then he could  
not well avoid stumbling over them.

(Francis Bacon, in his *Novum Organum*, mentions the  
fact that the “Northern Germans use subterranean caves  
as granaries,” and in another place says, “Grain in  
granaries, if turned and shaken, remains pure.”)

## CHAPTER VIII.

MR. R. A. YERBURGH, M.P.'S, SUGGESTION FOR  
NATIONAL GRANARIES.

IN the *National Review* for April, 1896, Mr. R. A. Yerburch, M.P., gave an illustrated and most interesting description of his suggestion for "National Granaries," which was criticised by the gentleman who contributes the very able and interesting weekly article on "Agriculture at Home and Abroad" in the *Standard*, April 8, 1896, as follows—

"Mr. Yerburch's plan for National Granaries, "as set forth in the current number of the "*National Review*, is less open to objection than "that of Mr. Marston, noticed in this column "on the 4th of February—and for two reasons. "In the first place, the proverbial plea that it is "‘only a little one’ may be made on its behalf; "and, secondly, it involves the storing of English "wheat, instead of foreign grain mainly, as "proposed in the other scheme. For the former

“reason, however, it is less complete than Mr.  
“Marston’s plan, as it proposes to keep in store  
“only about a third of a year’s consumption of  
“wheat, whereas the other plan involves a re-  
“serve equal to the total of a year’s imports.  
“Thus, whereas the annual cost of carrying out  
“Mr. Yerburgh’s scheme would be very much  
“less than that of the larger one, and the inter-  
“ference with trade would also be much less  
“serious, while British wheat-growers might  
“possibly be benefited by it, the degree of insur-  
“ance against shortness of food in the event of  
“war would be correspondingly reduced. The  
“new proposal is that what are known as silo  
“granaries, fitted with the best machinery for  
“shifting, airing, and drying grain with a  
“minimum of manual labour, and of sufficient  
“dimensions for the storing of ten million  
“quarters of wheat, should be built by the  
“Government; that one-third of this quantity  
“should be stored yearly till the whole had been  
“accumulated, one-third annually being subse-  
“quently sold and distributed to make room for  
“an equal quantity of new wheat; and that  
“contracts be made with British farmers for the  
“production and delivery of the quantity re-  
“quired annually, at a given price. The capital  
“expenditure, including the cost of ten million  
“quarters of wheat at thirty-five shillings a  
“quarter, is estimated at twenty-one million five  
“hundred and sixty thousand pounds, upon

“ which, it is assumed, only two per cent. in-  
 “ terest would need to be charged. The annual  
 “ interest thus comes to four hundred and thirty-  
 “ one thousand two hundred pounds, while  
 “ working expenses are put at the low total of  
 “ £208,525 depreciation (including repairs) and  
 “ insurance at £195,487, and brokerage at  
 “ £43,750. Thus the total annual cost of carry-  
 “ ing out the scheme is estimated, in round  
 “ figures, at eight hundred and eighty thousand  
 “ pounds. Excepting interest and brokerage,  
 “ these figures are purely conjectural, and it is,  
 “ therefore, impossible to criticise them in detail;  
 “ but Governments are not usually able to get  
 “ work done for less than commercial men can,  
 “ and the usual cost of hiring granary space for  
 “ large quantities of grain is threepence per ton  
 “ per week, or £1,392,857 per annum on ten  
 “ million quarters. With respect to interest,  
 “ two per cent. is extremely low, and it is a  
 “ question whether the Government could con-  
 “ tinuously borrow money at that rate. Then,  
 “ as to the brokerage, Mr. Yerburch assumes  
 “ that the seller would pay it, so that the Govern-  
 “ ment would be charged with it on only the  
 “ three million three hundred and thirty-three  
 “ thousand quarters sold annually; and he  
 “ allows only a fraction over threepence a  
 “ quarter, instead of the ordinary commission  
 “ of sixpence. If the Government employed  
 “ brokers to buy and sell for them, the usual

“course would be to pay commission on both  
“buying and selling, though it would be pos-  
“sible to make it a rule that those who sold to  
“the Government should pay it. Of course, the  
“expense of storing ten million quarters, and  
“buying and selling only three million three  
“hundred and thirty-three thousand quarters  
“annually, would be less than two-fifths of the  
“cost of storing twenty-five million quarters, and  
“buying and selling the whole of that quantity  
“every year, as under Mr. Marston’s plan.”  
(No ! *this is not my plan.*—R. B. M.) “But,  
“making allowance for higher interest than two  
“per cent., for an increase in working expenses,  
“for a probably higher commission, and for  
“railway carriage on the wheat sold by the  
“Government, the annual outgoings mentioned  
“could hardly be as little as double the amount  
“allowed by Mr. Yerburch. Then, the assump-  
“tion that wheat kept for three years would  
“improve, instead of deteriorating, is a bold one;  
“and, again, nothing is allowed for the consider-  
“able waste that would take place. It would  
“not be safe to put the cost of carrying out the  
“scheme at less than two million pounds per  
“annum, and the question is whether it would  
“be worth while to pay so much every year by  
“way of mere insurance for about one-third of  
“our annual consumption of wheat. But Mr.  
“Yerburch asks for no more than a Commission  
“to inquire into the practicability of his plan,

“and Mr. Seton-Karr has secured the second  
 “place on April 14th, for a Resolution to the like  
 “effect. Bearing in mind the importance of our  
 “food supply and the unquestionable risk of  
 “depending upon outside countries for four-fifths  
 “of the wheat we consume, the demand for an  
 “inquiry cannot be regarded as unreasonable.”

As this criticism contained an unintentional, but, in my opinion, most important misstatement of what I consider the chief feature in my own suggestion for the formation and working of a reserve of wheat, viz. the EXCHANGE by the Government of wheat a year old for an equal *value* at the *current market price* of new wheat, and not a sale, I wrote the following letter which appeared in the *Standard* of April 9, 1896.

It is not a question with me whether my plan is *better* than that of Mr. Yerburch or any other; as I have repeatedly said, all I want is to see the question dealt with by a competent body of naval, military, and corn-trade experts, appointed for the purpose by the Government. I confess that I do think my plan gets over the insuperable difficulties I see in the way of a continual buying and



selling on the part of the Government, and, on the other hand, I think it quite probable that Mr. Yerburch's scheme for storing the reserve may be better than mine.

“TO THE EDITOR OF THE *Standard*.

“SIR,

“I have no intention of re-opening this question in the *Standard*, especially as it is to be brought before the House of Commons by Mr. Seton-Karr, on Tuesday next, April 14. I must, however, ask you to allow me to correct the statement made by the writer of the article ‘Agriculture at Home and Abroad,’ viz. that ‘Mr. Marston’s plan involves buying and selling twenty-five million quarters of wheat every year.’

“In my letters to the *Standard* in February last, in letters to the *Daily News* of March 11 and 12, in the *National Review* for the present month, I have over and over again expressly repudiated [the idea of selling the proposed reserve] of wheat, and have advocated exchanging it, when one year old, for new wheat.

“A question such as this is not a Party question, and it is to be hoped that the Government will appoint a Commission, composed of experts in commercial, agricultural, and naval and military matters, to thoroughly consider the whole question of our food supply.

“And there is good hope that the Government will give the question the consideration it deserves, seeing that the *Standard* thus refers to it: ‘Bearing in mind the importance of our food supply, and the unquestionable risk of dependency upon outside countries for four-fifths of the wheat we consume, the demand for an inquiry cannot be regarded as unreasonable.’

“I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

“R. B. MARSTON.

“Surrey Lodge, Denmark Hill, S.E.,

“April 8, 1896.”

Even in this matter of exchange I have been repeatedly misunderstood. I say exchange *for value*, not in exact quantity, unless the values are equal; but as long as the corn importer gets an amount of old corn equal in value, at the current market price of the new corn he gives, he is no loser. The State merely wants to keep its reserve always renewed by exchanging old for new.

The most recent criticism of Mr. Yerburch's scheme which I have seen is the following letter, entitled,

THREAT TO BRITISH WHEAT-GROWING,  
in *Land and Water* of Feb. 13, 1897.

“THREAT TO BRITISH WHEAT-GROWING.

“SIR,

“British agriculture during the past twenty years has been compared with a gigantic sieve. What may be described as the ‘bread hole’ appears to be the largest hole in the sieve.

“During the past twelve years our raw bread has cost us £521,000,000. We have sent £381,000,000 abroad for wheat and flour, and our own wheat-growers have only received during these twelve years £140,000,000. Sir J. B. Lawes, in an article published during 1893 in the ‘Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England,’ gives the following returns.

Year.	Acreage.		Value of wheat Available for Consumption.			
			From Home Produce.		From Imports.	
			£		£	
1856	...	4,213,651	...	39,953,421	...	12,690,247
1866	...	3,649,584	...	31,996,586	...	22,596,463
1876	...	3,114,555	...	24,536,600	...	31,892,468
1886	...	2,355,451	...	13,393,559	...	30,115,640

“Last year 1,693,957 acres were under wheat in Great Britain, and the yield was worth about £9,185,000, and we sent £30,894,752 abroad for wheat and flour.

“No wonder agriculture and trade generally are depressed, as the above figures show that during each ten years our wheat acreage has decreased over half a million acres.

“If this enormous reduction in our wheat acreage had not taken place, instead of sending large sums abroad to help build up other countries, we should have kept much money here to advance our own industries. Messrs. Yerburgh and Seton-Karr are now rallying their forces to establish State granaries throughout the country.

“Should they succeed in their attempt, without doubt it will be the death-knell of wheat-growing in the British Isles. It appears very strange for those who profess to love their country to propose to spend an enormous sum on buildings to store wheat in when our own wheats keep best in the straw stacked. As most imported wheats are more suitable for storing in granaries than our own, the foreigners would fill them, not our farmers.

“We would annually send larger sums of money abroad for wheat, and the sale of a large quantity of the old grain just before harvest, to make room in the granaries for the new corn, would naturally depress the markets and bring down prices, which would cause a still further reduction of our wheat acreage and loss of employment to many of our farm labourers. The purchase of imported and manufactured articles of general use is largely influenced by the amount of work on the land: when that is reduced the shop-keepers naturally do less business, and require less goods from the wholesale houses;

these latter buy less from the manufacturers, who, finding the demand for their goods decreasing, reduced the output, and discharge some of their hands.

“Neither Mr. Yerburch nor Mr. Seton-Karr can confute my statements. My proposals, of a heavy import duty on flour, duty free imported wheat, and a bounty to our own wheat-growers to encourage an increased growth of that most important crop in this country, are, I believe, now well known, as during the past eighteen months, owing to the courtesy of various editors, I have had about two hundred and fifty letters on the subject in the London, provincial, and agricultural Press.

“Mr. Seton-Karr has given notice of motion to move a resolution in the House of Commons on March 2nd next.

“The enemy is at the gate.

“Is a scheme of State granaries to be carried without public protest? What are those interested in wheat-growing going to do? I pause for reply.—Faithfully yours,

“THOMAS G. READ.

“31, Cavendish Square, London, W.

“February 9, 1897.

“[We do not here wish to enter into any argument; but, in justice, we cannot let the above pass without remarking that Mr. Martin Sutton has the credit, as far as we know, of being the

first to suggest a bounty on wheat-growing in place of a protective duty.—Ed. *Land and Water.*]"

Mr. Thomas G. Read is a very able advocate for protection, he wants this country to do exactly what France did when she found her home-grown corn becoming insufficient for her population, only he proposes to arrive at the same result by taxing the English consumer instead of the foreign producer, and this appears to me, to use his own words, "a very strange thing for those who profess to love their country to propose."

Beyond the general statement that I cannot see how *any* scheme which proposes to create a reserve by *buying and selling* periodically enormous quantities of corn can be worked without totally disorganizing the corn trade, I have most carefully refrained from criticizing any other scheme.

Whether Mr. Read's statements can be confuted or not, I am quite certain that not one of his objections apply to my proposal, which cannot possibly injure the British farmer, may possibly assist him enormously, and cannot injure our corn trade in the slightest degree.

I am, of course, aware that Mr. Read's proposal of a bounty on wheat sufficient to enable our farmers to grow what we want would solve the whole problem. His "heavy import duty on flour" would, of course, cause the foreign exporter to change that comparatively unimportant form of wheat export into "duty free" grain.

He does not tell us what amount of bounty we should have to pay our farmers to enable them to compete with imported "duty free" wheat, nor does he tell us what prospect there is of carrying out a proposal which would in effect be a reimposition of the corn laws.

One of the greatest difficulties I have experienced in the endeavour to get my proposal understood, is that people who will not take the trouble to understand it, will yet take the trouble to write to the papers to say I propose to do something I never thought of doing, and then damn the imagined proposal, not with faint praise, but with the most lively vituperation they are capable of.

Here is one illustration: in answering, or, if that be too strong an assertion, in attempting to answer a critic who said my scheme

would upset the whole corn trade of this country, I replied that by passing our imported corn stream through an accumulated reserve of it, the price of the corn would be no more affected than it would be by passing it through a railway tunnel.

One of my critics immediately wrote to several papers to point out that of all the idiotic, absurd, preposterous, and utterly impossible proposals ever made, Mr. Marston's, to store thirty million pounds worth of corn in a railway tunnel, was the chief.

Another critic wrote to the *Field* newspaper to tell the farmers and country gentlemen of England that my plan for keeping the reserve always fresh was nothing but "barter," and asked if I imagined this country was going back to *that* stage of civilization.

The editor of the *Miller* referred to this misstatement of my proposal as follows:—

"Last week we examined Mr. Yerburch's modified scheme of national granaries, as it may be termed, in comparison with Mr. R. B. Marston's more comprehensive, if not more excellent plan.

\* \* \* \* \*

"It is probable that sooner or later the merits



of Mr. Yerburgh's scheme will be examined by a Parliamentary committee and compared with those of its rivals. In the mean time Mr. Marston has come forward once more, this time in the columns of the *Field*, to explain his particular plan, which, after all, is easy enough to understand.\* It may be observed that Mr. Marston's proposals had been criticized in the columns of our contemporary by a correspondent signing himself 'Examiner,' in the following terms:— 'Mr. Marston proposed that the Government should build granaries and keep in them a reserve of wheat equal to our total annual imports of wheat and flour, buying in and selling out the whole every year. He says his plan is one of "exchanging" old wheat for new; but, as we have advanced beyond the barter stage in our commercial proceedings, the only practical method of effecting the exchange would be the sale of old wheat and the purchase of new.' Now, in his reply, Mr. Marston very properly observes that as far as bartering old corn for new is concerned, his proposal would not amount to anything of the kind. Barter is a free exchange of goods of equal value at market price."

I owe a debt of gratitude to the editor of the *Miller*, as also to the editors of other corn

\* My friendly critic did not quite understand it all the same, as I shall show presently.

trade and agricultural papers, for the courtesy with which they have examined and criticized the suggestions of an outsider like myself. I would, however, prefer to call my plan not a rival in any way to that of Mr. Yerburgh, M.P., or any other, but simply an alternative suggestion.

Mr. Yerburgh's *object* is exactly the same as mine, and I am quite sure all that either of us want is to have the whole question considered by a competent parliamentary committee—which I am glad to see, the editor of the *Miller* says, must *sooner or later* be appointed. If such a committee is appointed, and it produces such evidence as *convinces* Mr. Yerburgh and myself that—

1. There is no necessity for having a reserve at all; or that
2. There is necessity for it, but to provide it is impossible; or that
3. There is necessity, and that either his or my plan or some other plan is the best, we shall, in any case, have gained our object.

If we are *not* convinced, I hope we shall go on pegging away.

I am sure he will agree with me, that

ridicule and misrepresentation in the public press are infinitely to be preferred to that stolid indifference which says, "What does it matter to me? things will last my time." What if our forefathers, who crushed Napoleon, and were nearly crushed themselves in doing so, argued in that style?

If there is a solid foundation of truth in any great national proposal, ridicule and abuse simply advertise it, draw attention to it, and lead men who might otherwise never have thought of it to see the position for themselves.

I have no axe, or rather corn, of my own to grind in this matter. I am not directly or indirectly more interested in this question than any one else in the United Kingdom, and I shall be satisfied if I can convince only one other Englishman, who has not thought of the matter before, that we have during this century gradually drifted into a position which, splendid as it is in all other respects, yet involves us in a danger which was unknown in any previous century in our history.

## CHAPTER IX.

SOME LESSONS FROM THE PRESENT FAMINE  
IN INDIA.

It is a curious circumstance that, as will be noted presently, the area of country and the population affected by the present famine in India approximate roughly to the area and population of the British Isles. If, then, the task before the Indian Government is so great (and the result still uncertain) in a time of peace in a self-feeding country, what would be the task, *in a great war*, of our Home Government, when our food comes from countries we may be fighting?

“In the Indian famine, 1877-78, five and a half millions of human beings perished.”

“In 1877 the amount raised by English generosity and charity for the relief of Indian famine reached £700,000.”—*St. James's Gazette*.

At the present moment (March 4, 1897) the

Lord Mayor's Fund for the present Indian Famine is already nearly four hundred thousand pounds.

The following figures relating to the 1887 Relief Fund are from a letter in the *Westminster Gazette*, January 16, 1897, by Mr. William Digby, Hon. Sec. in India of the 1887 Madras Famine Relief Fund, Trafalgar Buildings, 1, Northumberland Avenue :

“Our expenditure at head-quarters and throughout our Committees was only .92 of one per cent., so that 19s. 9½d. out of every pound received reached the person in distress.

“As to the objects for which the money was expended, and the number of persons relieved, the following details may serve:—

Object of Relief.	Nos. Relieved.	Amt. Exp.
Support of Life (food, money doles, etc.)	1,000,000	£218,183
Orphanages ... ..	482,273	50,391
Day Nurseries ... ..	750,000	61,870
Clothing ... ..	872,293	92,616
Building or repairing houses ... ..	145,113	44,255
To Cultivators for Seed, Bullocks, etc.	496,960	276,662
Miscellaneous Charity ... ..	225,238	43,038
Totals ... ..	3,971,877	£787,015

“Of this distribution the Viceroy in Council said, ‘We do not think a more judicious method of expending the bulk of the vast sums placed at the disposal of the Committee could have been devised, and it has doubtless done incalculable

good. Our heartiest acknowledgments are due to the Committee for this result, and for the care they have taken to avoid friction or interference with the Government.' ”

The following extracts are from a most interesting article by Mr. George W. Forrest in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, January 9, 1897.

“It may be interesting and useful at the present moment to note and discuss the great measures which the Government must take in the campaign against famine, in order that the majority of Englishmen may follow the present calamity with an intelligent appreciation of its phenomena as they occur. During the past twenty years the Government of India have devoted much labour, time, and thought as to the best way of grappling with a foe that claims more victims than war. As the chief of the staff draws up instructions for the guidance of the generals in the field, so the Government of India have prepared famine codes for the guidance of their executive officers, which contain detailed instructions suitable to the varying wants and administrative systems of the different provinces, and embrace, as far as human foresight can go, all matters falling within the scope of relief administration. These codes were put to a severe test on the occurrence of scarcity in several provinces during recent years, and

though on the whole they proved satisfactory, many defects were brought to light, and the Governors of India therefore determined to undertake a complete revision of the code. This has been done, and a revised code has been prepared in each province. It is in accordance with the rules and regulations laid down in these new codes that the present campaign against famine is being conducted. The order for mobilization has been given promptly, and obeyed without confusion and alarm. In the famine of 1877-78 the supreme Government were slow in believing in the advent of the scourge, and five and a half millions of human beings perished in that miserable time. It is only by early and active measures that a population can be made ready to meet the suffering and disease which a widespread famine entails. The Government of the North-West Provinces are, therefore, to be commended for the prompt measures they took when severe and widespread distress became apparent. They have provided for a large population, and it is universally admitted that they have done it in a very complete manner. In the North-Western Provinces, in the most severely affected districts, the first steps have been taken towards helping the agricultural districts. The payment of the land revenue has been suspended, and advances have been made for the purchase of seeds and the construction of wells. But the suspension of

the land revenue and advances for seeds and wells help only the well-to-do who are suffering from distress. The great task in warring against famine is to provide the people with food, and to provide it in a manner that will be least injurious to their self-respect.

### “RELIEF WORKS.

“In order to accomplish this, relief works have to be started. They are of two classes—large relief works and small relief works. A large work has these advantages: it employs numbers, soon gets known, and people go direct to it, instead of wandering in search of work and dying before they reach it. The employment offered by the State can hardly be other than some simple form of labour, and it must be in the open air. The making of roads, and the digging of large tanks and small roadside tanks, are the class of work best suited for the purpose. The people migrate in families from their homes, and in the case of road-work the men are employed in digging and the women and children are made use of as “fillers.” The digging of tanks gives more equal employment to both sexes, because tanks are more easily dug, being damp and smooth. Care is taken to use the labourers according to their castes and aptitudes, landowners being employed as supervisors, literate persons in helping to keep tallies,



Brahmans in distributing, and Kahars in carrying water. Relief in their homes is, under the instructions of the Famine Code, afforded to indigent women whom national custom debars from appearing in public. Small relief works are commenced, either to employ those whom it may be deemed inexpedient to draft to works at a distance from their homes, or to afford employment to those needing it before scarcity has deepened into famine, or before large works are ready to be started. Towards the close of a famine they are useful in bringing the relief workers back to the vicinity of their homes. The small relief works generally undertaken are tank improvements, metalling roads, clearing channels. Care is taken to select only such works as can be maintained when completed, or such as require no future cost for maintenance. With regard to the large works, those are selected of whose future beneficial effects in the distressed districts there can be no shadow of doubt, and apart from their being relief works are good to carry out for their inherent usefulness."

### "WORK, WAGES, AND SHELTER.

"Labour imposed for labour's sake is little if at all preferable to idleness. Indeed, in one respect it is worse, since labour increases the quantity of food man requires. Labour expended

on works which are unlikely to be continued to completion after the famine has passed away, and which must, therefore, prove abortive, is labour wasted. Government is under the severest obligation to see that, as far as possible, famine labour shall be of a reproductive kind. The question what wages ought to be paid on relief works is one of cardinal importance, and it has been settled in the famine codes for each province, and cannot be altered. The wage represents the money value of a specified weight of food according to prices of the day; and as prices go up and down, the wages rise and fall."

I have given these particulars about famine in India because I think it is not difficult to see in them very grave warnings for ourselves.

One of the arguments most commonly used against the suggestion that this country should provide against famine is, that our two greatest sources of bread supply, viz. the United States and Russia, are never likely to be stopped by war at one and the same time.

To this I reply that there are many living who were living when we were fighting the United States and almost all Europe as well.

What has happened may well happen again; there are probably before us struggles as tremendous, if not more so, as those

we have triumphantly passed through, our Empire is only in the youth of its power.

But war is not the only thing which could effectually starve us. Only a few years ago there was a great famine in Russia. The example of India shows us that dearth arising solely from want of rain may in one year destroy over five millions of people in a self-supporting and food-exporting country, and this in spite of the sacrifice of millions of pounds sterling.

Is it unwise to imagine the possibility of the United States being visited with such a deficient harvest as would leave, perhaps, not enough for her fifty or sixty millions at home—that would wipe out utterly her surplus on which we now rely?

The American wheat crop in 1891 was 611,780,000 bushels, in 1893 it was 396,132,000 bushels.\* Taking the bushel as 60 lbs. and the quarter as 480 lbs. the amount for 1891 was 76,472,500 quarters, and for 1893 49,516,500 quarters, or a difference of 26,956,000 quarters, or 5,776,285 tons.

\* From Report of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Such an enormous difference between the American wheat crops of 1891 and 1893 ought to warn us that even in peace time our bread supply from North America is an uncertain quantity; I say North America because the Canadian crop for the same years fell in nearly the same proportion. Fortunately the Russian crop was nearly double as large in the bad American year of 1893 as it was in the good American year of 1891.

I think these figures go some way to justify my argument that it is not at all necessary that we should have to be at war with both Russia and America before there was danger of famine in this country. Such a failure of the American wheat crop as left no surplus for export might occur when we were at war with Russia; might, indeed, be a tremendous inducement to Russia to begin the "Kriegspiel"—as our two castles would be gone if she would not, and America could not, feed us. And one year's reserve of wheat in this country would checkmate that move before it was made.

If I had my way, I would make it compulsory to teach our boys and girls, as a

national creed, in all our schools throughout the Empire, that the only power we can rely on is our own inside power, always ready for use against other people's outside power—that the only safeguard for peace for us is to be at all times fully prepared for war.

I would also have them impressed with respect for other Nations by telling them of our defeats as well as of our victories, by showing them that the measure of our glory is the valour of those we have defeated.

I have been asked if the scheme I suggest for preventing the possibility of a great famine in this country in consequence of the drying up of the enormous rivers of food which now flow in all the year round could be applied to prevent famines in India.

I am not sufficiently acquainted with the circumstances affecting the question in India to be able to say that what I firmly believe is a perfectly sane and possible scheme for this country would be so for such a vast population as that of India.

I do hope this much, that those who are in a position to know the circumstances of the case as affecting India will not do what so

many do, viz. condemn my plan before they have taken the trouble to understand it.

It seems presumptuous on my part to say so, but the main feature of the plan I advocate is, as far as I know, an entirely new one. I have dealt with it in detail elsewhere in this work, but may state it very briefly to be—

1. To gradually accumulate in suitable and protected centres a supply of wheat equal to the amount imported in one year, *i.e.* between two harvests.

2. To make it illegal to sell, or in other words to throw on to the market, a single sack of the reserve of corn except to avert famine, and then to sell it to the corn-merchants to be re-sold by them only at such reasonable profit as may be fixed by law.

3. To keep this reserve of wheat always and for ever in good and perfect condition by compulsory EXCHANGE of it for the new corn of each year's importation. The exchange between the Government store corn given to a merchant in compulsory exchange for his new importation to be arranged so that the merchant cannot be at any loss or inconvenience thereby.

4. By this plan the two chief and perhaps unsurmountable obstacles to the establishment of such a national reserve of food are, I think, overcome, viz.—

*a.* The impossibility of keeping wheat good for more than a year or two.

*b.* The impossibility (by any other plan) of avoiding the complete upsetting the corn trade of the country.

It will perhaps occur to the reader to say, as many corn-merchants have said to me when discussing this question, that I have overlooked the fact that our imported corn varies continually both as regards quality and price; but I have not overlooked these most important facts, as will be seen by referring to Chapter X.

As I have said before, I have not sufficient knowledge of the circumstances affecting the question in India to form more than a rough idea as to whether the plan I propose for this country could be put into practice in India, with its vast area and enormous population.\*

\* Since the above was written, I see that Lord George Hamilton, at the great meeting at the Mansion House on January 16, said that the district in India affected by the

Still, I cannot help thinking that if we could estimate the amount of money expended by the Government of India out of its revenues from taxation, and the amount contributed by public and private charity in India and in this country, say for the period of the last twenty years, we should be astounded at the total, and we should still have the ugly fact that, notwithstanding these sacrifices, we did not save the lives of over five millions of our fellow-subjects in India, in the famine of 1877-78.

It seems to me possible that the money now in a great measure sacrificed on relief works in time of famine, might be better expended in time of plenty in preparing for famine.\*

I mean by the establishment throughout famine "extended to no fewer than 164,000 square miles, and the population involved was 36 millions." Curiously enough, I see from *Whitaker's Almanack* that these figures approximate very closely to those of the area (121,115 square miles) and population (37,740,283) of the British Isles.

\* In a conversation I had recently with Sir Richard Temple he acknowledged that, of necessity, much of the "relief work" done by the natives during a famine was neither necessary *per se*, nor always useful.



all parts of India subject to famine of fortified grain stores, each capable of holding sufficient grain to support a certain district over a period of drought, the same system of compulsory exchange of new corn for old which I suggest for our own country to be carried out in each district, so that the district would always have one harvest in hand. The grain would always be perfectly good, and no corn-merchant would be damaged one halfpenny.

The plan involves, of course, the drawing to one centre of the new crop of a district, and its exchange for last year's crop to be distributed over the district for the support of its inhabitants.

It seems to me that it would work in this way—

The Government, having formed an enormous depôt of corn, gives notice that all grain grown within a certain district is to be brought to that depôt—there to be exchanged for such a quantity of last year's grain as will be the *equivalent in money value* of the new grain, so that the merchant will get as much, when he sells it to the millers

and bakers, for the old grain as he would for the new.

For instance, if the new crop was of a better quality than the old, the Government would have to give more old corn to make up the balance.

On the other hand, if the new grain was inferior in quality to that of the previous crop, the Government would give an equal value but a smaller quantity than it received.

If the *depôt* is fixed at a place which is also the ordinary trade centre and grain market of the district, the question of the cost of bringing the grain to the *depôt* and redistributing it would not arise.

An Indian farmer, having gathered in his little harvest, takes it, perhaps many miles, to the nearest market. At that market there is a branch of the central Government grain *depôt* of the district. In return for his twelve sacks of new grain he is given twelve sacks more or less of old grain which he sells in the ordinary way.

The question then comes, supposing this plan to be practical, would not the expense of maintaining the granaries be greater than the

attempting, as we now do, to provide against famine when it comes? I think not; and the existence of fortified *and provisioned* depôts under Government control would unquestionably be an immense assistance in strengthening our hold on India and repelling external foes or quelling internal rebellion.

The fortified granaries should be garrisoned by British troops.

In a time of famine in India the governor of the affected district would open the granaries and feed the people.

The great difficulty in India is that so large a portion of the country people live from hand to mouth; and, if their crop fails, they have nothing to fall back on.

As long as we hold India, the world expects us to do our duty to her subject inhabitants—it is our one justification in the sight of rival nations who do not love us, and look on us as a nest of sea-robbers who have grabbed all the best parts of the earth for our race. Our one justification is that British rule means benefit to those we rule, not in India only, but in every part of the globe.

If this plan would save the lives of millions

or even thousands, even if it cost more than the present system, it would be our duty to carry it out; but, I think, if the loss of revenue from a famine-stricken district, not for one season but for several after, is added to the cost of providing relief by public and private charity, my plan of having always one harvest in store to fall back on at any time would be infinitely cheaper.

The rise in the price of bread and corn in this country during several months of 1896 must unquestionably be attributed to a considerable extent to the famine in India; in other words, we have already paid millions sterling for bread and grain more than we should have done had there been no famine in India.

Here is a grim picture by an eye-witness signing himself "G," in the *Standard*, January 23, 1897:—

"I have, in former famines in India, seen men, women, and children with the skin sloping backwards from the lower ribs to the hip bones; no stomach at all; every detail of their anatomy visible; the head merely a skull covered with skin; the eyes blazing with fever. I have seen

these skeletons walking, crawling, dying, and dead. I have seen those to whom solid food meant death. No one who has not seen such a sight would believe to what extremity the human frame can be brought."

One of the reasons I mentioned (in the *Nineteenth Century* article in February, 1896) for having a reserve of wheat was that it would give us time to grow, not only wheat, but other grain and other vegetables.

It will be seen from the following interesting extract from the *Westminster Budget* of November 20, 1896, what a very important part in a time of famine even the humble carrot may play.

But it might be twelve months before we could get an extra crop even of carrots in this country, *i.e.* if war broke out too late for planting them to mature the same season. If war came on us in early summer it would be fifteen months or more before we could reap and garner the next year's harvest of corn.

It will be very interesting to hear how the Indian Government succeeds with its Vegetarian experiment.

“VEGETABLE SEEDS BY THE TON FOR INDIA.

“It is evidently the intention of the Indian Government to do all in their power to avert the terrible calamity of famine threatening certain districts in Northern India, owing to the failure of the monsoon which should have helped the crops in August. September and October, too, were practically rainless. This continued drought has added seriously to the perplexity, and millions will be dependent upon the Government for the very necessities of life. Amongst the thousands of tons of corn that are being secured by the authorities for distribution, we learn that British vegetables are to be extensively cultivated under some recognized system of irrigation.

“Our representative,” says the *Westminster Budget*, “was despatched to glean all particulars from Messrs. Carter, the eminent London seedsmen, always foremost in important matters connected with our farms and gardens.

“‘Is it correct that the Indian Government have cleared out your warehouse of all the seeds available?’

“‘Hardly to this extent; but we have been doing a little business for them lately.’

“‘Not, then, to any appreciable extent?’

“‘No; you would say not, if you looked over our warehouse, for there is scarcely an empty space in it. What we have done was to select, pack, and ship several thousands of sacks of

seeds, but an order of five hundred to a thousand bags is nothing exceptional in the export seed trade. The point we pride ourselves in over this important order is the fact that it was executed and on the high seas within nine days from the date of its receipt, and considering a very large portion consisted of seeds obliged to come from the Southern part of Europe, you will see how far our great resources assisted to this satisfactory conclusion, which, we believe, has greatly impressed the Government.'

" 'I understand you had to use Marseilles as a post of departure?'

" 'Yes, it is quite true we were driven, for want of time, to ship a portion from there, and even then we had to make use of the Grand Vitesse service on the French railways.'

" 'You see, we were working again to beat time, and being a Government order, all the officials were glad to help it along. To show you how eager all were to assist, we were told that the P. and O. Company shut out five hundred tons of heavy goods to make room for our seed, and the captain of one of their steamers was ordered to burn out one of his coal bunkers, so that when he reached Marseilles, he would have room for all we had ready. We always have large gangs of men available for pressures of this kind, as we experience them frequently. I can call to mind the Irish famine, and again when the McKinley tariff came into force a few years

since, we shipped many thousands of bags of vegetable seeds into America, and they had to arrive by a certain date to avoid extravagant duties. Why, only last week we executed an order for New Zealand, mostly clover seed, which filled twenty-five 400-gallon iron tanks, each tank holding about one and a half tons, and we are just filling nineteen hundred barrels with seeds for South Africa.'

" 'Are these latter going into Rhodesia to re-sow that country?'

" 'Probably a good deal of it is for that purpose—but stay, you must not press me too closely on this point. Let us say they are going to an obscure part of South Africa.'

" 'What area would such a quantity of seeds plant as have been ordered from you by the Indian Government?'

" 'Say roughly a hundred thousand acres.'

" 'But is any nourishment obtained from common vegetables?'

" 'You must not call our vegetables by such a name. We only handle highly selected strains, and each in its special class contains the greatest amount of nutritive properties. Take the carrot, for instance; the varieties we are sending will not only sustain life, but are positively fattening. You may not be aware that this crop furnishes one of the staple foods amongst the mass of the population throughout the South of France and Italy, and of all carrots the white and yellow are



the richest, and yet they are only given to stock in this country. Put a carrot before a Londoner, he would reject it as cattle food.' ”

In the Appendix will be found an illustration of one of the iron air-tight tanks in which Messrs. Carter send seed all over the world.

## CHAPTER X.

### HOW TO FORM AND MAINTAIN A RESERVE OF WHEAT EQUAL TO OUR ANNUAL IMPORT OF IT.

THIS chapter must be to some extent a recapitulation of matters dealt with all through this book.

If we, as a nation, decide to form a reserve equal to our annual import of wheat and flour, it is perfectly certain we should have to pay for—

1. The original store.
2. The cost of maintaining it.

On page 36 I mentioned thirty millions sterling as the amount we might have to pay for our reserve—it might be less or more—but in any case it would be only an investment in a splendid security, and all we should actually have to pay would be the interest on that investment annually. Whether the money

for the original investment should be obtained by the issue of a special Government Stock bearing such interest as would attract that amount of capital, or the establishment of a Sinking Fund, is a question on which I need not speculate. That the money would be forthcoming there can be no doubt. If we take, as I suggest, five years to form the reserve, we should want five millions a year to pay for it.

A perfectly legitimate and possibly best way of paying for the reserve, would be, as I said in the *Daily News* a year ago, to apply some of the money now devoted to reducing the National Debt, to forming the Reserve of Food.

Russia, since 1891, has been seriously contemplating spending about twenty-five millions sterling on a naval military canal, connecting Riga on the Baltic with Kherson on the Black Sea, utilizing the rivers Duna and Dnieper for the greater part of the distance. It is estimated that it would take five years to complete this gigantic scheme.

Surely, if Russia can contemplate this great scheme of national defence, our empire need

not shrink from investing thirty millions in what will always be worth, as long as we continue to live on foreign wheat, far more than its original cost.

What we shall have to pay for then is only the expense of keeping and renewing our reserve.

Having bought it, as I have suggested, by giving advance orders in the corn-producing countries at such a price, and under such conditions as will assure the producer a fair profit, and the certainty that what he produced would have to be in addition to the usual market demand, we gradually over a period of five years accumulate our reserve.

During these five years, and ever afterwards, the Government should, I suggest, have the power to keep it good by *exchanging* it for the current import of wheat.

By having the power I mean that it should, at its discretion, be able to either take from an importer a shipment of wheat, or pass it on to him.

As I shall presently show, the editor of the *Miller* considers this part of my proposal the most difficult to carry out, but I think

this arises entirely from a misunderstanding of that proposal.

In forming our reserve we should, of course, purchase only the very best kinds of American, Russian, and other wheat; and in exchanging it year after year we should only select the very best kinds of those imports. Good wheat properly treated will remain good, as I have shown, for three or four years at least; this proved fact would give the Government the *option* of passing the whole ordinary import of a poor quality harvest on to the importers; if next year's foreign harvest was also of poor quality, it might even pass that on also. If the third year's import was not better, it might be necessary, in order to renew the reserve, to take it, or part of it, and give the importers an equivalent value from the good corn in the reserve. It would not greatly matter to the Government if its reserve was a few million quarters more or less one year—on the average it would always be maintained at about our average import. Although the *price* of wheat over a series of years may vary tremendously, the *quality* of the best kinds varies only slightly. The Government would

not concern itself in the least about the price, its only object being to keep always in the country a sufficient amount of the best kinds.

One year the Government might have had to give an importer of No. 1 Duluth wheat a greater weight of last year's No. 1 Duluth, because the new wheat was rather better quality than last year's. But next year it might be just the reverse, it would then not have to give quite so much as it took; but in either case it would give the importer an exact equivalent of wheat in money value, whether it gave more or less. In other words, a hundred quarters of one year's harvest of No. 1 Duluth, whatever its quality, is, and always will be, worth so many quarters of next year's crop. If the next year's crop is of the same quality, it will be worth as much *in weight* as the previous year, and the importer will get as much as he gives. In any case he will receive in exchange for his new wheat such an amount of wheat one year old as will, at the current market price, realize for him exactly the same amount of money as if he had not had to make the exchange.

I have endeavoured to make this very

important point clear, because in it lies the crux of the whole proposal of exchange in order to keep our reserve always good.

It is perfectly obvious that the Government might be holding in the country a reserve of wheat bought for thirty millions, which was worth at the current market price some years after sixty millions, or, conceivably from some tremendous drop in prices, only fifteen millions. The Government would not in the least concern itself about *that*. Its only care would be to have always in the country an amount of wheat equal to our import for one year. Whether wheat is cheap or dear cannot alter one iota the amount of nourishment in the shape of bread which it will produce.

As regards the question of the amount we should have in reserve, I have suggested one year's supply, because it might take a year to increase our home-grown supply, and because I think a great national scheme of this kind, not intended for any particular year, but for ever, should adapt itself automatically to the needs of the country. If, by any happy circumstance, our import of wheat was found to

be decreasing and our home-grown supply increasing, it would manifestly be necessary to store less every year. Unhappily, all the facts point in the other direction at present. Our home-grown loaf is diminishing while our imported loaf is increasing. That is one great reason for making our annual reserve equal to our annual import.

Coming back to the question of cost, our original investment, not in thirty millions' worth of ironclads, which will perish, but in thirty millions' worth of corn, which will never perish, we have now to deal with the cost of maintenance, and some practical method of maintenance.

These, of course, are questions which can only be properly answered by a Royal Commission.

All I can do is to suggest what seems to me a simple plan, although it must of necessity be a great one.

Every town in the United Kingdom which has a corn-market, should be compelled to build a granary or granaries equal to holding one year's supply of wheat or wheat flour.



These granaries should be under Government control, and some at least of them might be fortified in the manner I have suggested and illustrated on the folding plate facing page 191.

If not in the way I have suggested, then in some other way, these public granaries should be made as secure as possible against fire, the mob, or an invader.

London would certainly be in an infinitely safer position both as regards defence and famine if it had one of these fort-granaries at some little distance from it on each of the main lines.

As the daily or weekly supply required by the corn-merchants for the millers and bakers would be drawn from the public granary of each town, it is evident that the nature and quantity of the supply kept in the granary would vary according to the requirements of the particular market. Some towns, where there are few or no mills, require more wheat in the shape of flour than as grain; in fact, a great proportion of our imported wheat is made into flour at the ports at which it arrives, and a certain proportion (not large,

but far too large, in my opinion, for I wish there was none) is made into flour in the countries we import from.

I think it ought to be illegal to import any grain as flour or meal, because every barrel of flour imported means a barrel less to be ground in this country, and a great increase in that form of import would intensify the precarious position we are in as regards our food supply, because it would mean the ruin of our millers, and the milling industry would of necessity fall into decay.

It is also, of course, much more difficult for a foreigner to adulterate grain than it is flour; but if it is more profitable to send us flour, it is quite certain mills with the latest machinery will increase in America, etc., and decrease here. If a duty is out of the question, then a simple prohibit of import of wheat, and possibly other grain, *except in the form of grain*, seems to me a matter of state policy—unless we are to see another great home industry go to the wall, and live on foreign baked flour, foreign condensed milk, foreign tinned beef, etc.

Every angler who has fished over these

islands as I have will bear out my assertion that the milling industry is being driven to the great ports, the "Jolly Miller" is disappearing from our trout and grayling streams ; let us hope he will be induced to stop at the ports and not emigrate with his machinery to other lands.

Although this question of import of flour is a most important one, and must to some extent affect any scheme for forming a reserve of breadstuff, I do not think that it makes it any more difficult to carry out. Flour will not keep good so long as wheat, but it will, if properly treated, keep good for a year or more ; but I think it would be wiser to form the reserve only of the best kinds of wheat in grain, to renew it only from those kinds, and to pass on to the importers at once imports of flour or inferior wheat.

It will be asked, "How do you propose to convert the Government reserve of wheat into flour?" Exactly as is now being done all over the country. In filling the granaries in different parts of the country when forming the reserve, the Government would have to consider the demands of each market ; in some

cases it would have to get part of the corn ground into flour at the port of arrival, as is done now, in others it would have to send it on unground. If there are insuperable difficulties in the way of having public granaries in connection with all important corn-markets, and thus ensuring that the district covered by each market shall always have a reserve equal to its annual consumption, then it becomes necessary to consider the formation of a comparatively small number of much larger reserves near the great ports where wheat now arrives.

Unquestionably this plan would simplify the matter, because the Government would not have to deal with the conversion of its reserve into flour. It would renew at the ports its great stores of the best kinds of imported wheat, from the best kinds as they arrived at the ports. Only, in this case, instead of each important town paying for its own Government granary, the country generally would have to pay for building the great granaries near Liverpool, Bristol, Glasgow, Hull, etc.

As regards the cost of cleaning, turning,

and generally keeping in good condition the wheat stored in the Government granaries, if I am correctly informed—and my authority is the editor of a Liverpool corn-trade paper—it costs a private corn-merchant 3s. per quarter of wheat (averaging 480 lbs.) per annum, *including interest*; and wheat so treated is improved to that extent in value. If this is true in the case of a private corn-merchant working on a small scale, it ought to cost the Government, doing the work with the most improved machinery and on a vast scale, considerably less; also, if wheat so treated (whatever the current price may be) is improved in value to that extent. The difference would, of course, be taken into account by the Government in making an exchange of old for new wheat.

Let us follow for a moment the fate of a cargo of No. 1 Best Duluth wheat, or of some other best kind of imported wheat. On its arrival at Liverpool, the Government Wheat Reserve Department has the power either to allow it to pass on to the importer at once, or to take it from him and give him in exchange an amount of the same kind of

wheat, one year old, which will realize, when sold, exactly the same amount of money as the merchant would have got for his cargo of new wheat.

It does not matter what the current market price is, a certain number of quarters of new, uncleaned wheat will always be worth, any day of the year, a certain number of quarters of cleaned wheat a year old; and only on this basis of exchange, I contend, would it be possible to constantly renew our reserve without in the least affecting current market prices, or "Futures," or any other corn-market operation.

If it is true that the 3s. I have mentioned covers the cost of maintenance, and has improved the wheat for bread-making purposes to that amount, then the cost of maintaining the reserve in good condition will not fall on the tax-payers directly; it will be paid by them and by all bread-eaters indirectly, as it is at present.

It is, of course, impossible to establish such a national insurance reserve against famine as I, and many others, believe to be vital to our existence, without expense or difficulties.

If I have, from want of knowledge of the difficulties, minimised them, I am, at any rate, certain they are mole-hills as compared with the mountains of danger before us, which our position as a foreign food-eating people involve us in.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE QUESTION OF INVASION—FORTIFIED GRANARIES  
—CAPTAIN MAHAN'S OPINION ON THE CHANNEL  
TUNNEL.

IN the House of Commons (January 29, 1897), the Government proposal, so ably stated by Mr. Brodrick, to spend five million four hundred and fifty-eight thousand pounds on "military works," gave rise to a very interesting debate. From Mr. Brodrick's speech as given in the *Times* of January 30th, I have taken the following extract :—

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE DEFENCE OF  
LONDON.

"I come now to the last head of the loan, amounting to £1,149,000, the main items of which represent proposals of a novel character. To these proposals I beg the special attention of the Committee. We have, in the first instance, to complete the arrangements for



“mobilization for the defence of London. The  
“principle on which our troops will be employed  
“for defence in case of invasion was drawn out  
“ten years ago by the most eminent soldiers of  
“the day, and was then approved by the Govern-  
“ment. The points at which the various army  
“corps will be stationed for the immediate attack  
“of an invading force have been clearly laid  
“down. But it has been held that, apart from  
“the mobile army and the recognized garrisons,  
“London must be surrounded by defensive  
“positions strongly held and fortified with artil-  
“lery, as a second line of defence. (Hear, hear.)  
“By this means alone can the field army be  
“given absolute freedom of movement, and have  
“the security that a light column striking at  
“London from some other point of the coast  
“will meet with determined resistance. (Hear,  
“hear.) These positions, therefore, have, after  
“an exhaustive survey, been selected by trained  
“officers and approved by the Commander-in-  
“Chief and Adjutant-General. Since 1888, by  
“successive votes of Parliament, thirteen of  
“these centres have been acquired, and store-  
“houses have been erected on several of them,  
“and work commenced. This scheme, therefore,  
“is in full working, and the expenditure hitherto  
“has been about £68,000. A further £96,000 is  
“required mainly to complete the storehouses  
“and the access to the works. The objects  
“attained will be recognized by every member

“of the House. Sites have been chosen deliber-  
 “ately instead of hurriedly; concentration at  
 “those sites has been worked out; the store-  
 “houses will contain the ammunition and  
 “intrenching tools assigned to the line of in-  
 “trenchments to be manned, and we shall thus  
 “carry further the decentralization of stores.  
 “Ten years ago the stores were all concentrated  
 “at Woolwich; and it was estimated that it  
 “would have then taken six weeks to distribute  
 “the stores, in the event of war. In addition to  
 “the more easy and expeditious distribution of  
 “stores, we shall have the very large forces  
 “assigned to these positions of defence around  
 “London, so placed as to be available within a  
 “few hours to be drawn forward to support the  
 “field army in any place where additional  
 “numbers are required. (Hear, hear.) Even  
 “at a distance of nearly a century, it may be  
 “worth quoting the opinion given by the  
 “Emperor Napoleon as to the value of fortified  
 “positions, especially in the case of the less  
 “highly trained troops—

““At the time of great national disasters,  
 ““empires frequently stand in need of soldiers;  
 ““but men are never wanting for internal  
 ““defence, if a place be provided where their  
 ““energies can be brought into action. Fifty  
 ““thousand National Guards, with three thou-  
 ““sand gunners will defend a fortified capital  
 ““against an army of three hundred thousand

“‘men. The same fifty thousand in the open  
“‘field, if they are not experienced soldiers  
“‘commanded by skilled officers, will be thrown  
“‘into confusion by a few thousand horse.’

“The last, but not the least pressing, of our  
“requirements which I have to bring forward,  
“is the provision for the training of the troops  
“by means of ranges and of manœuvres. (Hear,  
“hear.) The question of ranges in this densely-  
“populated country is becoming yearly more  
“difficult. (Hear, hear.) We have to find  
“means for corps of the Regular Army, of  
“Militia, and of Volunteers to shoot every year.  
“We could not, of course, undertake to provide  
“ranges in every county, or for isolated com-  
“panies. But our proposal is to expend a sum  
“of £500,000 in setting up ranges at various  
“centres throughout the country, with, it is  
“hoped, camping grounds attached to them,  
“at which it will be the duty of the general  
“officer commanding to see that every descrip-  
“tion of troops has the opportunity of firing  
“during the year. (Hear, hear.) I am sure  
“the Committee will agree that that is the only  
“way in which we can meet this great national  
“dilemma in regard to the provision of ranges.  
“(Hear, hear.) I cannot, of course, indicate  
“the localities where the ranges will be pro-  
“vided, but I can assure the Committee that  
“in their selection cheapness and ease of access  
“will be the primary considerations.”

In the debate which followed, one or two of the speakers reiterated the exploded idea that another invasion of this country is impossible. I say exploded idea, because if Mr. Broderick and the "most eminent soldiers of the day" held invasion to be impossible, they would not ask the country for money to build forts round London.

With full conviction of their necessity, one can only wonder at the modesty of the sums asked for defending the richest and most populous city in the world.

From my point of view the most telling criticism of the Government proposal was that of Mr. Allan, the member for Gateshead, who made statements entirely bearing out what my chief object all along has been to prove, viz. that

#### OUR PRECARIOUS FOOD SUPPLY IS OUR GRAVEST DANGER.

"Mr. Allan (Gateshead) held that, provided they could smash any fleet in the Channel, or elsewhere, with their fleet, there need be no fear of invasion. (Hear, hear.) Supposing London was invested by a successful army, how long did the Under-Secretary think they could hold out

even with the proposed fortifications? There were no national storehouses of food from which they could feed their troops and their millions of population, and in six weeks they would be brought to their knees by starvation. He would have liked to see the advisers of the Under-Secretary lay down a plan of large storehouses, from which they could feed the population in case of invasion. The weakness of Great Britain was that we could not supply ourselves with food for two months.\* What, then, was the use of spending all this money upon forts round London? He did not object to necessary expenditure of this character; he had advocated the fortification of our coaling stations, and still thought that the state of those stations was a source of weakness. It was a mistake, however, to confine attention to the southern coasts of England and Ireland. The west coast of Scotland should be defended, and the exploits of

\* The old saying that half a loaf is better than none is true enough, but I fear this suggestion of only a sixth part of the annual loaf would help us only in the case of a short war, which our great naval wars never have been, and, in my humble opinion, as I have already said, never can be; for I refuse to believe our empire could be quickly beaten, if ever; and I think it might take a long time for us to beat such combinations against us as the history of the past, and the present International conditions, plainly warn us we *may* have to meet.—R. B. M.

Paul Jones should be remembered. The War Office was short-sighted in confining attention to the southern coasts. He knew no party in this matter; he believed in the greatness of the Empire; he was a Radical Imperialist. (Cheers.) He did not object to the expenditure of five and a half millions, if that expenditure was necessary; but he would like to see attention given to the problem how to feed our population in case of the island being invested."

Such words as these from a "Radical Imperialist" of the standing and influence of Mr. William Allan, M.P., give one great hope that the time is approaching when the Government will no longer refuse to call a competent council of the nation's leading men to tell us if this food question is or is not a vital one.

It will be seen from the extracts given from the *Times*' report of the debate on January 30, 1897, that the following matters were brought forward :—

1. Necessity of fortifying London.
2. Necessity of providing more rifle ranges.
3. Our dependence, when all is done, on our food supply.

These matters are referred to in a letter I published in the *Daily News* of March 12, 1896.

## STORAGE OF THE SUGGESTED RESERVE.

“OUR FOOD IN WAR TIME.

“COULD ENGLAND BE STARVED OUT?

“SIR,

“I am asked how I propose to treat the important question of storage of the reserve of corn or flour I advocate. As for the granaries, well, I do not think it would be wise to hire private granaries, which are enormous buildings piled storey on storey, at the mercy of fire and the mob. Our military authorities have been talking for years past of some scheme of detached forts, round London and our other great towns. Then why not combine State granaries and detached forts? Both granaries and forts ought to be in direct connection with our great railway system, and with an independent water supply. A long and broad two-storied granary, with cement floors and sides, and bomb-proof roofs, with a railway through it, enclosed in a fortified embankment, surrounded by a moat, with quarters for from five to forty thousand troops. That, it seems to me, would be an ideal granary, and a nasty nut for an invader to have to crack, on his way to all our big or little towns. In peace time, of course, it would not necessarily be occupied by soldiers, either regulars or volunteers—only by the staff necessary for working the granary—but such a fort would be most valuable

in connection with military exercises and manœuvres both for the regulars and volunteers. In war time, and in time of famine, the forts would be garrisoned by the local volunteers, who would also find them suitable places, in many cases, for rifle ranges in peace time. Now for the cost of these granaries. The town or district which would be supplied in a time of famine threatening, ought to pay the cost of its own fortified granary, if necessary, by a loan extending over some years. Very much the same thing as this is already done in France, Germany, Russia, etc., only on a much larger scale, although they grow their own bread. As for the interest on the investment of, say, £30,000,000, well, if it could not be covered in the 3s. per quarter charge I have mentioned, or by some sinking fund, and we had to offer three per cent. for it, it would cost £900,000 a year, or less than a halfpenny addition to the income tax. And, without feeling it, we are now sacrificing more than four times as much a year by paying off the national debt with Consols at or near 110.

“I am, sir,

“Your obedient servant,

“R. B. MARSTON.

“St. Dunstan’s House, Fetter Lane, London, E.C.

“P.S.—I hope that one of my boys will some day be an officer in the British navy, and one great reason on my mind for transferring our reserves of corn from Russia and America to our



own land is that I want to see our fleet as much as possible at liberty to fight, and untrammelled by the wretched but fearfully responsible business of convoying a fleet of corn or other food ships—all compelled to go at the best pace of the slowest old tub of the lot. Given time, and we can build more war-ships and in less time than all the rest of the world put together, and, as Captain Mahan tells us, that is the factor which will give victory in future great naval wars."

In criticising the Government proposal Mr. T. Lough, M.P., said: "The right honourable gentleman had talked of fortifications in thirteen strong places round London. He should like some information as to where the fortifications were to be placed."

Mr. Broderick, "I explained on the line of hills round London."

At first sight it looks as if Mr. Broderick's reply knocked the bottom out of my suggestion that we might combine state granaries and forts.

But a very little consideration will show that this is not so, as I venture to predict that if we ever do decide to have state granaries they will have to be under military control, and so placed as to be capable of defence, not

only against a most improbable invasion, but also against a quite possible attack from a hungry mob; for it must not be supposed we could stave off all want and distress, even with the reserve I suggest. To keep famine at bay, to give ourselves time to fight and grow food enough, that is all we could hope the reserve would do. That is ALL.

Did ever in the world's history "all" mean more?

As Mr. Allan so pertinently said to the Government, what is the use of building forts when you have made no provision for feeding the millions the forts are to protect?

It is not to be supposed that if we fortify London that other of our great defenceless towns will be content to remain without protection.

I have given the reasons why I think the suggested reserve should be kept in fortified granaries.

All the bread which we in London, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, and other great and small towns, eat is grown outside those towns—thousands of miles outside those towns most of it. But it flows in in one

constant endless stream just as the water does. What I suggest is that each town, or at least each important town, should establish reservoirs of corn in suitable places, and pass the regular stream of corn or flour coming into the town *through* those corn reservoirs, to keep the reserve ever and always *fresh*, just as the small stream of water fills the great reservoir, keeps the water always fresh, so when drought comes and the supply from the stream is cut off, the people live on the supply in the reservoir till the drought is over.

The supply of wheat and flour which comes into London and our other towns comes chiefly by the great railways and the canals, which must also ever be most important factors in any scheme of defence for those towns.

London is to be fortified—and the forts will be on the hills which command the approaches to it; there are to be thirteen forts, it seems, then why not let them cover and defend thirteen great fortified granaries? I agree entirely with Mr. Allan that forts without food are a delusion; you might of course

provision these thirteen forts with enough food for their defenders, but what good would that be if the six millions inside their protection were starving?

If the hills, railways, canals, are important factors in this scheme of defence for London, surely adequate and protected food supplies are more necessary still.

If our imported and home-made bread supply (including, of course, biscuits, cakes, pastry, etc.), amounts to roughly about thirty-two million six hundred and sixty-six thousand quarters of wheat for a total population of about thirty-six millions, then greater London's six millions will want a sixth of it, or roughly, about 2,613,279,840 lbs.

Two billions, six hundred and thirteen millions, two hundred and seventy nine thousand, eight hundred and forty pounds weight of wheat, or 1,166,642 tons and 1760 lbs.

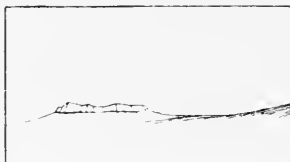
I have estimated the quarter of wheat as 480 lbs., which is its lowest average.

Following out Mr. James Knowles's suggestion, that I should not only draw attention to what he and many others admit is a



THE FC  
 pri fire). The big guns shown at the end of the fort are on the Monerieff disappearing  
 obj sloping earth embankment in front, as well as by the deep cutting in the cliff. The  
 em protect the long rows of barracks and stores built into the inner side of the outer  
 a system of defence. There can be no need to enlarge on the importance of defending  
 graere matters of detail are not in question. I think they will admit that such fortified  
 fro alone a great store of wheat—worth, perhaps, half a million of money—would be safe

FORT.



SECTION, showing Fortifi



On the oppos  
 truck und  
 for holdin  
 "Air-tigh

## SUGGESTION E

(For storing part of the year's

national danger, but that I should make the attempt to point out how the danger may be averted, I have been bold enough to suggest a form of granary which would at the same time be a strong fort and storehouse of war material, and in peace time be capable of utilization in connection with army and volunteer manœuvres, and afford facilities for rifle practice, the want of which is so much felt.

In the illustrations on the plate opposite, I have given a suggestion—for it is nothing more—of a fortified granary which would, I think—

Protect an enormous reserve of wheat ;

Protect the main line approach to a great town ;

Afford in peace time facilities for rifle practice, and a most useful lesson in the conduct of regular or volunteer manœuvres.

It cannot be questioned that the more our at present almost defenceless great towns are defended, the less chance will there be of an attempt at invasion. Nothing but their defenceless state makes any project of invasion possible.

Put very briefly, what our possible invaders reckon on when calculating on the chances of success, is a temporary disablement of our fleet, and a rush on London, there to dictate terms to us, and strike medals to commemorate our defeat. I have seen medals "made in France," by the first Napoleon, to commemorate his taking of London !

If we mean to defend London, it should be done seriously, or not at all. The present Government proposals are obviously only a first bite at the cherry. In round figures, a million is asked for to provide—defences for London !

But the Government proposals are on the right road. They, at any rate, recognize the fact that defences are necessary.

It is not so very long ago since a Dutch admiral sailed up the Thames and up the Medway and captured our then largest battleship, the *Royal Charles*, and took her to Holland.

Although I think another invasion of this country is quite possible, I do not think it would be a successful one, unless we are foolish enough to throw away our sea-power



by permitting a private railway company to build a bridge over to the continent. The Channel Tunnel scheme is, as Captain Mahan points out, a bridge. But it is far worse than any over-sea bridge would be. *That* would unquestionably be at the mercy of our fleet. But what could any fleet do against a bridge under the sea, once our end of it was not in our possession? If our military authorities admit that London is not safe, it follows that no precautions for securing our end of a tunnel connecting us with France could be safe.

Some years ago, when there seemed some possibility of the Channel Tunnel scheme being carried out—and the natural difficulties in the way are, unfortunately, very small—I wrote the following letter to Captain A. T. Mahan :—

“To Captain A. T. Mahan, U.S.N.

“January 6, 1893.

“DEAR SIR,

“Our Parliament opens next month, and it is, I believe, the intention of the promoters of that—in my opinion and in that of, I hope, a majority of our people—suicidal pro-

“Such a tunnel would be a bridge between France and Great Britain, and, to the measure of its capacity, would remove such obstacles to transit as are imposed by the belt of sea which now separates you from the Continent. This, of course, is the object of its promoters. The question as to the consequent danger to your country—depending upon the possibility of this bridge being seized by surprise or treachery, and upon the value of such precautions as can be taken against surprise or treachery—is rather military than naval, and I give my own opinion with reserve. Historically, every bridge is an element of danger, and its existence in any case should depend upon the balance of advantages and disadvantages in the particular instance. Those who trust to precautions, to be brought into play at the last moment, might do well to read (in the pages of Thiers, Lanfrey, or Marbot) the story of the surprise and seizure of the great bridge of Vienna, in 1805, by two French marshals, practically alone, in the teeth of an Austrian division of six thousand men, specially posted to protect it, and supported by a powerful artillery. The particular combination of fraud, treachery, and audacity on the one side, with imbecility on the other, is not, indeed, likely to be repeated. History does not repeat itself so literally; but it does teach again and again the dangers of surprise—the dangers of over-confidence. The capture of New Carthage, by Scipio,

for instance, has no point of resemblance to the Vienna bridge, save the lesson of security roused from sleep to encounter ruin.

“Marbot makes a pregnant comment upon the Vienna transaction. The Austrians, he says, always postponed too long the destruction of bridges. *They* did this to retain the advantages of counter-offence. In the case of the tunnel, there will, I suppose, be a large amount of British capital embarked, which will be strongly represented in Parliament and in the city. Can any sane man believe that that tunnel will be blown in, and all that money sunk, unless in a moment of panic? It may safely be predicted that, once built, it will not be destroyed, but that throughout any war reliance will be placed upon its defences. What the Austrians did for military reasons, you will do to save your pockets; and you will have continually in your midst an open gap, absorbing a large part of your available force for its protection.

“As to the effect upon the sea power of Great Britain, it is obvious that your navy, were it tenfold its present strength, can neither protect the tunnel, nor remedy the evils incurred by its passing into the hands of an enemy. To one freshly charged with the impressions, produced by six years’ study, of the imposing and decisive effects of your maritime power upon your own history and that of the world, the possibility of its obliteration as an important factor is perhaps over-

staggering. It is an odd kind of thing—making one lay down the pen and muse—to think of an open passage to Great Britain in the hands of a foe, and British ships, like toothless dogs, prowling vainly round the shores of the island.

“But, barring this contingency, it seems to me indisputable that the weight of your sea power will be immeasurably diminished by the influence this additional danger must have, in the councils of your Government, when a question of war looms. To unconditional advocates of peace, another fetter upon your action may be a reason the more for the tunnel; but whether the pride of the British people is yet prepared to accept this argument, I doubt. You already have—unavoidably—too many hostages in the hands of fortune. Will it be wise willingly to yield another?

“Very faithfully yours,

“A. T. MAHAN.”

Comment of mine on this reply would be impertinent. I can only thank Captain Mahan, from my heart, for it, and add that it is now for the first time, and with his sanction, published in this book.

It has been my great privilege during the last sixteen hours to read, and finish reading, weeks before it will be published, the only copy at present in this country of Captain Mahan's

forthcoming work, "The Life of Nelson, the embodiment of the Sea Power of Great Britain." It is, in my humble opinion, a glorious book. It as far exceeds all other pictures of Nelson and his work, as the great admiral and his achievements surpass all others. I say this, not in depreciation of what has been written by others about our chief national hero—and I have read nearly, if not quite, all that has been written in book form—but because I know there does not exist any other such a simple and yet grand, such a lucid and complete story, of the "embodiment" of our sea power as this. As Admiral Tryon said of Captain Mahan's works on Sea Power, it is "simply great"—the "best thing ever done." As I followed the American historian from page to page, with ever-increasing fascination, it seemed as though some kindred spirit which had been near him through all his glorious career, watched all his actions, knew the inmost workings of his grand, but human heart, was recounting worthily, truly, with complete appreciation, and without false reserve, all that Nelson was, and all we owe to him.

An attempt to show my countrymen that not even a Nelson might be able to save us from defeat by FAMINE, is the sole object of, and excuse for, this book.

## APPENDIX.

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### PRINCE BISMARCK AND THE POSITION OF ENGLAND.

(FROM THE *Standard's* CORRESPONDENT.)

Berlin, July 20, 1896.

Prince Bismarck's paper, the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, which has recently been giving the world its views on International affairs generally, publishes an article on England to-day, and heads it "English Anxieties." The principal passages of this effusion I give, in deference to the quarter from which it is supposed to be inspired. The writer says—

"English policy is governed by anxiety about the conflict which England must fight out with Russia and France. France is striving for the Soudan, Russia for India, and as England is their common antagonist in these aspirations, they are natural allies even without a treaty. Egypt is of great strategic importance to England's position both in the Soudan and in India, and is, therefore, now the pivot of British policy, the anxieties of which have been not a little enhanced by Russia's recent attitude towards the Egyptian question. England will not give up Egypt, but does not feel herself a match for Russia and France, and is, therefore, casting about for help—hitherto, and, let us hope, in future, in vain, so far as Germany and her ally, Austria-Hungary, are concerned. As regards Italy, the case is somewhat different. England and Italy have large common interests against France, because she threatens both in the Mediterranean. In case of need, the British Fleet is to protect the Italian coast, but Italy

cannot offer any counter-service, and England does nothing gratis. It is known why Italy's withdrawal from the Triple Alliance cannot be a matter of indifference to her allies, and it may be assumed that an Italy completely under the influence of England might threaten such withdrawal in order to effect secret alterations in the Triple Alliance Treaty, extending the *casus foederis* to all violations of her Mediterranean interests which are identical with those of England. We presume that all such attempts will be rigorously repelled, for otherwise a situation would be created which would bring the Triple Alliance into collision with France and Russia. England would be in a position to exult over that, for she would once more have found the big stupid strong fellow who fights her enemies in her stead. This would be bad for us. History teaches that England, being safe from war in virtue of her insular position, would once more utilize the mutual conflict of the fatally bleeding Continental States for a piece of Europe as an opportunity of developing her commerce and industry, annexing whole countries in other continents, and finally robbing her exhausted allies of the fruits of their victories by calmly going over to the enemy. A wise policy must, therefore, take care that we hold aloof from England's conflict with France and Russia, which will not seek war with us, when fighting England in three Continents, and that we should reserve our strength in order to be able to throw it into the scale when things come to be rearranged.

"But the British are tormented by another anxiety. They no longer believe entirely in the unassailability of their European Island Empire, for, whereas many things have changed elsewhere in the last decades, England's system of defence is still the same as in Wellington's time. It suffices for non-European countries. In view of the world-wide extent of her interests, she must have more ships on foreign coasts than Russia and France. But the Power or Powers which preponderate where the conflict must be decided—that is, in the Channel and the North Sea—will be victorious. But the French Channel Fleet alone is already a match for the English, and its junction with the Russian Baltic Fleet would put an end to England's superiority in the waters in which the conflict must be decided. Add to this that just her insular position involves the danger of England being starved out by the enemy so that she must unconditionally surrender, if a victorious hostile fleet should succeed in cutting off her supplies. England has not ignored this danger, and is, therefore,



working diligently at the task of increasing her Navy to such an extent that it will be superior under all circumstances. If she maintain her superiority at sea, her antagonists must try to convert the sea war as quickly as possible into a land war, and to seek a decision where all the nerves of the World-Empire meet—that is, in London. The essay entitled, ‘Attempts to Invade England,’ by Baron Lüttwitz, a Prussian officer of the General Staff, expresses the opinion that the question of the possibility of such an invasion must be answered in the affirmative. The attempt to invade England is still, indeed, a risky, but no longer an impossible enterprise.”

The article concludes by saying that—

“The possibility of an invasion is not of burning interest at present, but the above description of the situation will suffice to explain several striking symptoms of the nervousness of the present British policy.”

It will be seen that Prince Bismarck quotes the opinion of Captain Lüttwitz, of the German General Army Staff, as to the possibility of invading England. I have only recently been able to obtain a sight of Captain Lüttwitz’s paper, which ran through one or two numbers of the *Militär-Wochenblatt*—the official organ of the German army and navy. The paper is a well-written account of invasions and attempted invasions of Great Britain and Ireland. In my chapter entitled “A Menace to other Nations” I have given reasons for thinking that we might find ourselves at war with Germany, France, and Russia, and to me much the most important and significant thing in Captain Lüttwitz’s article are his opening words—

*“Russia, France, Germany, and Italy have of late years progressed with more or less success in the domain of Colonial extension; it is not impossible that respect for their mutual world-wide interests may banish the spectre of a European Continental war which has threatened since 1871.”*

In other words, he thinks France and Germany might join Russia against us. I had not seen his paper when I made the same suggestion. His view, briefly stated, is that if the three countries named attacked our Channel Fleet, they could at any rate so lame

it as to get time to throw an army into England, then a rapid march on London, and it would only need a little judicious pressure to bring us to terms, to include the division of our fleet and colonies among them. A pleasing picture—from the Continental point of view.

#### ARBITRATION FROM A "COLONIAL" POINT OF VIEW.

"Those who think that the millennium has begun, because there is some chance of a Treaty of Arbitration between this country and America, should read an article entitled, "Arbitration and the Colonies," which appeared in the *National Review* for January, 1897. I give the following extracts and criticism of it from an article in the *Daily Graphic*, January 8, 1897:—

"'Colonial,' who writes in the *New Review* for January, 1897, on 'Arbitration and the Colonies,' gives a summary of what this means of settling disputes has done in the past—of what it is likely to do in the future. Excellent in theory, it is too ideal to be practical, and 'it has almost invariably been unfavourable to the interests of England, even when right was so clearly on her side as to make it a matter for surprise that she went to arbitration at all.'

'For, with the exception of the award on the Alabama Claims, boundary and other disputes between Great Britain and foreign countries have been settled by arbitration at the expense of Newfoundland, Canada, and South Africa. And it has never dawned across the arbitrationist intelligence that these Colonies have also a right to consideration on the question. . . . Arbitration is, no doubt, a lofty ideal, but to Britons Imperialism should be one loftier still. The one, however, demands sacrifices from Englishmen at home as well as abroad: the other demands them only from Colonials. Hence the popularity of arbitration.'

Arguments have been strongly urged lately in favour of a permanent treaty for the settlement of future disputes between England and the United States, but 'Colonial' wants to have none of them. After one memorable treaty Canada, whose southern boundary had until then been the Ohio River,

'was robbed of what are now the fertile States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, to not one foot of which the thirteen Colonies had the shadow of a claim. But the American representative was the astute and far-seeing Benjamin Franklin; the English representative, the weak and ignorant Oswald. The one saw Western America as it is now; the other saw it as it was then, a wilderness of forest and swamp. Since then arbitration has cost Canada the fruits of the war of 1812-14: 4,000,000 acres of land between Lake Superior and the Lake of the Woods; an outlet on the Atlantic coast; Oregon and Washington territory (270,750 square miles); the sea-gate of the West, San Juan; and the sovereignty of the St. Lawrence on the east—to all which her right was as England's to the Isle of Wight. Still more disastrous, in a pecuniary sense, was the privilege granted by Great Britain to the United States—for the most part gratuitously—of fishing in the waters of the North Atlantic coast.'

Elsewhere the picture is not more pleasing:—

'Arbitration has been trying to settle the fishery dispute in Newfoundland for the past half-century; and it has failed. In South Africa it has deprived the east coast of its only safe harbour, Delagoa Bay, which, like the British Gate of the West, San Juan, was practically given away by statesmen who, while incapable of adding a single rood to the Empire, showed themselves past masters in the art of making it less. Our claim was based on Captain Owen's treaties with native chiefs in '32, and the Dutch settlement of '20. Portugal's claim was based on the Treaty of Monomotapa, 1607, a document not much more authentic than the map in "King Solomon's Mines."

But 'Colonial,' who is evidently a Canadian, is bitterest against America. 'Her plan is to give barren privileges in exchange for substantial advantages; a very little for a great deal. For instance, by the Treaty of Washington, in return for the free navigation of the St. Lawrence for ever she granted to Canada the free navigation of Lake Michigan, and of two Arctic rivers whose very existence may be doubted, for ten years. Again, in return for the privilege of fishing in the inexhaustible grounds of the North Atlantic coast, she gave Canada the privilege of fishing in the exhausted grounds of her own coast down to the Delaware River

Bluster is, however, her favourite device for getting what she wants. By its means she has obtained nearly a quarter of the whole United States at the expense of Canada.' When arbitration cases go against her she refuses to pay and sharp practice is her creed. 'Colonial,' indeed, would have no sentimental objection to going to war with America. Why should war with the United States be looked upon as a crime in 1896 when in '12 and '70 it was regarded as a matter of no importance? he asks, and though America is favourably disposed to consider an arbitration treaty, he is all for avoiding a path which has hitherto proved so disastrous.

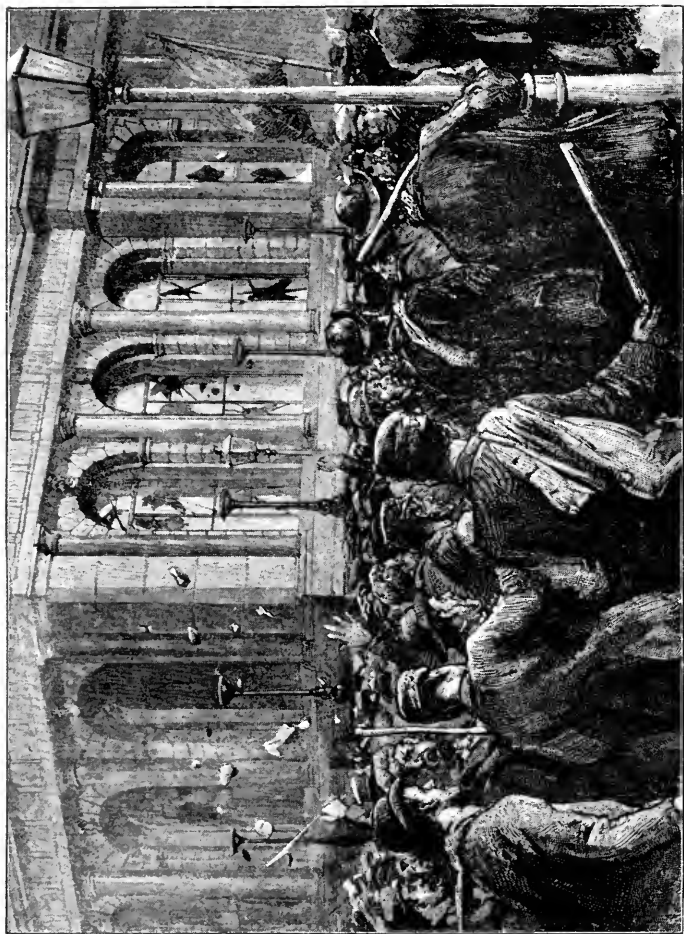
'Friends of the movement wax eloquent on the titles of kinship. These are strong, but not quite so strong as they would have us believe. Saxon blood may flow in the veins of the average American, but it is a sadly diluted stream. How can it be otherwise when for forty years the breeding-ground has been steadily flooded with aliens, for the most part Germans, Italians, and Irish? . . . More significant still is the fact that some of the New England States would be almost depopulated were it not for a constant influx of Irish. The Australasian is of the purely British type; in the Canadian and South African that type is modified by the original French and Dutch respectively; in the American it is struggling to hold its own against alien forces embodied on a scale unexampled in history. Who can affect to believe that it can endure without the loss of its individuality?'

In point of fact, England, he thinks, is cordially hated in America, and is now going the way to alienate her Colonies by testing too much their splendid loyalty."

#### THE SAILING POWERS OF THE U.S. CRUISER, *Chicago*.

In a note in the early part of my book, I referred to the sailing powers of cruisers, and mentioned that I had before me pictures of two celebrated cruisers, the *Chicago* and the *Calliope*, and that at any rate they were full-rigged for sailing. I was writing to Captain Mahan at the time, and happened to mention the point. In a letter to hand this morning (March 10, 1897), he says—

"As regards the *Chicago*, she could do very little under sail, and I don't believe any twin screw vessel can. I think there was



RIOTERS ATTACKING THE CARLTON CLUB.  
(See "The London Riots in 1886.")





THE FIGHT AT THE CORNER OF WELLINGTON STREET, STRAND.

(See "The London Riots in 1886.")





a unanimous opinion on board that her spars hindered her more in a head wind than they helped her in a fair one."

#### THE LONDON RIOTS IN 1886.

I give the following extracts from "Haydn's Dictionary of Dates," as a small object-lesson of what a very small London mob can do when it means mischief.

"Peaceable mass meeting of the unemployed in Trafalgar Square, joined by the Social Democrats with red flag led by Hyndman, Burns, and Champion, who, unchecked for about two hours (4 to 6 p.m.), from Pall Mall to Oxford Street, and neighbourhood, smash windows, ransack shops, attack and rob private carriages; finally dispersed: police organization inefficient (except by Superintendent Cuthbert); estimated damage £16,000, 8th Feb.; other meetings; rioting checked 9th, 10th Feb.; rioters sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. . . ."—March, 1886.

"Riotous assemblage of the unemployed in Trafalgar Square dispersed 17th Oct.; meeting at Hyde Park dispersed by the police after severe conflict, 18th Oct.; again dispersed 19th Oct.; meeting in Trafalgar Square, about 2000 went to Westminster Abbey; disorderly, 23rd Oct.; quiet meetings 24th and 27th Oct. and since; arrests for seditious language, &c., 4th to 8th Nov.; meetings in Trafalgar Square prohibited, 8th and 18th Nov.; processions of disorderly mob dispersed, and meetings in Trafalgar Square prevented by mounted and foot police, aided by the 1st Life Guards; several severe conflicts with men using iron bars and knives; many seriously injured, chiefly police; Mr. Cunninghame Graham, M.P., a magistrate, and Mr. John Burns and many others arrested; moderate conduct of the police; Sir C. Warren's arrangements thoroughly successful, Sunday, 13th Nov.; many sentenced to penal servitude. . . ."—11th Nov., 1886.

#### WHEAT-GROWING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

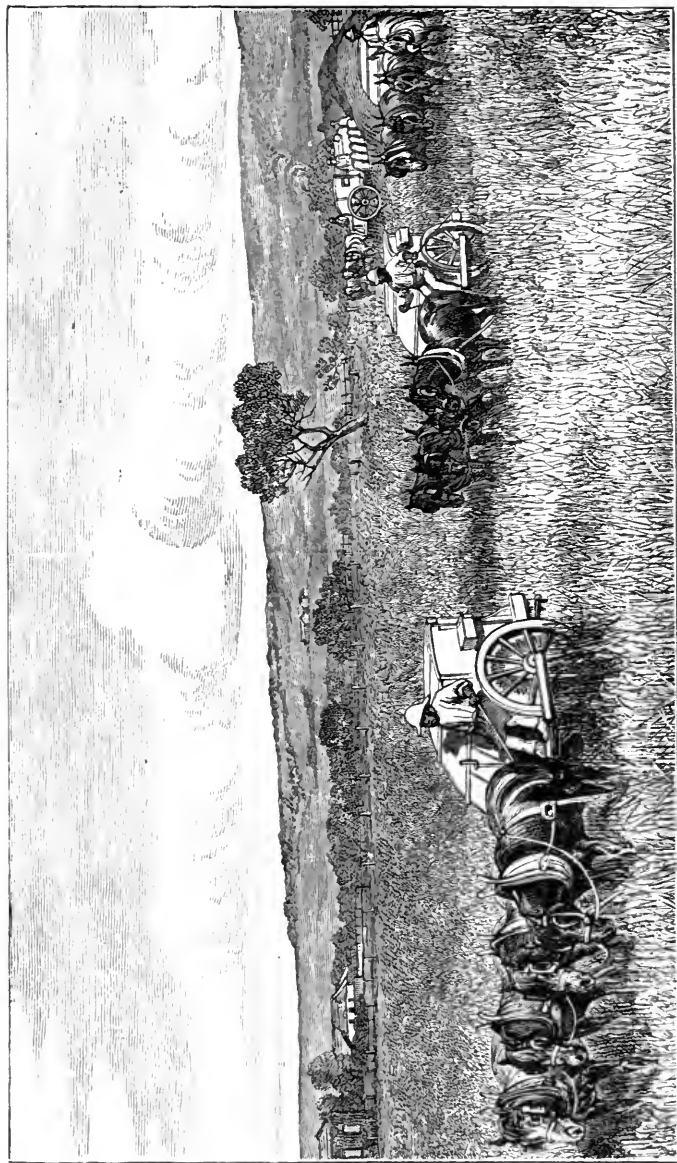
(FROM "SOUTH AUSTRALIA," EDITED BY WM. HARCUS.)

I give the following extract from *South Australia*, by Wm. Marcus, to show the great contrast between wheat-growing in Australia and at home. The great drawback is, however, drought, which only too often ruins the season's crop.—R. B. M.

"To this it must be added that South Australian wheat and flour are the finest produced in the world. This is seen by the fact that in London it brings the very highest price, and in the other Colonies it is bought to mix with their own cereal produce.

"The cost of cultivating wheat in Australia is very small compared with that of other countries. Anything like scientific farming is rarely, if ever, attempted in the Colony. The old saying, 'Tickle the land with a hoe and it laughs with a harvest,' is almost literally true here. Virgin soil is ploughed up three or four inches deep, and often, without even fallowing it, the seed is thrown in, and, should the season be moderately favourable, a fair crop rewards the small labour of the husbandman. This goes on from year to year—anything like a rotation of crops is never attempted. There are farms in South Australia which have been annually cropped with wheat for twenty or twenty-five years, and yet last harvest they produced as abundantly as ever. Though the farming is what would be called slovenly in England, yet as a whole, and over a series of years, it answers the purpose of the agriculturist. There are many farmers who have grown rich in this way. Beginning on a small scale, with a section or two of eighty acres, they have, from the profits of one year, enlarged their freeholdings for the next, until several of them now have very large and valuable estates, which yield them a handsome income.

"From the table published in this book, it will be seen that the average price of wheat is low, and nothing could enable the farmer to thrive, with his comparatively small average per acre, and the low price at which he is compelled to sell, but the cheapness of production. The expense of cultivation is small, and the gathering in of the crop, when it is fully ripe, costs a mere trifle. The greatest invention ever produced for the agriculturists of South Australia is Ridley's reaping-machine, which reaps and thrashes the wheat by one simple process. A machine of this kind could be used only where the climate is dry, and where the grain is allowed to ripen and harden in the ear. In some of the Australian Colonies the machine cannot be used, in consequence of the moisture in the air. In South Australia, however, as soon as the crop is fully ripe, the machine is put into the field, and the wheat is reaped and thrashed with amazing rapidity, and at a very small expenditure. It may safely be said that the cost of farming has been reduced to the minimum in South Australia."



REAPING AND THRESHING WHEAT AT ONE TIME.  
(See "Wheat-growing in South Australia.")



THE RUSSIAN VOLUNTEER FLEET OF MERCHANT CRUISERS  
(i.e. COMMERCE-DESTROYERS).

The fact noted on the coloured diagram at the beginning of this book, that "at the present moment (February, 1897) a Russian merchant cruiser is taking a present of corn from Odessa for the Indian famine," gives additional interest to the following particulars about the Russian Volunteer Fleet, taken from that excellent paper for keeping us well posted in such matters, the *Daily Graphic*, January 6, 1897.

"SEBASTOPOL.

"There are at present seven of the thirteen steamers forming the Volunteer Fleet in the port of Odessa, namely, the *Petersburg*, *Saratoff*, *Orel* (pronounced Aryól), *Ekaterinaslaf*, *Keiff*, *Tamboff*, and *Yaroslavl*. The Admiralty will not, therefore, be short of transports should the sudden necessity arise for landing an army corps on the Bosphorus. The other vessels of the flotilla, the *Kherson*, *Vladimir*, *Kostroma*, *Nijni-Novgorod*, *Voronesh*, and *Khabarovsk*, are at sea on the Far Eastern route. The *Orel* goes this week to Messrs. Hawthorn, Leslie, and Company's yard at Newcastle-on-Tyne for important constructive improvements. Two other new steamers, to be called the *Moskva* and *Poltava*, are building on the Tyne and Clyde respectively. These additions will be of the same type and capacity as the *Kherson*, a sketch of which recently appeared in the *Daily Graphic*. Orders for three further additional steamers will shortly be placed with British builders.

"The net earnings of the Volunteer Fleet for 1896 will aggregate about three millions of roubles, and this sum will be expended, of course, chiefly in the purchase of new vessels. During the current year the fleet will make in all twenty-one trips to the Far East, that is, nineteen from Odessa and two from St. Petersburg. The cabin fare for the single journey, to or from Vladivostock, is 500 roubles, and the deck passage 100 roubles, both inclusive of food. The merchandise tariff averages about 40 copecks per poood. The journey from the Black Sea to Vladivostock occupies about forty days, the distance being about 10,000 miles. The Government pays 210 roubles passage and ration money for each convict transported to Saghalien; the number of these *déportés* averages about 1200 each season. The association receives from the Imperial Government a yearly subsidy of 617,000 roubles.

"The present project of the Volunteer Fleet directorate is gradually to raise the strength of their flotilla to thirty first-class vessels, all of which will be so constructed as to be readily convertible into fast armed cruisers."

The project is certainly significant for us.

#### OTHER PROPOSALS FOR FORMING A RESERVE OF FOOD.

As already mentioned, Lord Winchilsea, the *Miller*, and others had drawn attention to the danger of our position before I did, though without my knowing it at the time I wrote the article in the *Nineteenth Century*, February, 1896. The publication of the article brought me many interesting letters, endorsing or criticising my proposal. Among them was the following, from a clergyman, the Rev. Sidney F. Green, who said—

"The subject first was forced upon my attention by my being called upon to preach at harvest festivals; and wherever there has seemed the least use in doing so, I have dwelt upon the supreme peril of our present position—a peril to which both Athens and Rome in old days succumbed helplessly. The whole thing is so clear to me that I have sometimes felt moved to stump the country to arouse public opinion.

"I trust, however, that now you have so ably stated the case, it will be warmly taken up in such a way that we may see the measure you recommend carried out in measurable time.

"I was amused by your *Standard* critic, speaking of the contingency to be provided against, as one that might never occur. Certainly it would never occur twice."

Then Mr. Wm. Bull, of 66, New Alma Road, Southampton, sent me a copy of a letter he had published in the *Hampshire Advertiser* for April, 1894 (suggesting we should form a reserve of ten million pounds' worth of flour), signed appropriately, "*Si vis pacem para bellum.*" I am sure Mr. Bull will be glad to send a copy of his letter to any one wishing to have it.

IRON TANKS FOR HOLDING FOUR HUNDRED GALLONS OF  
GRAIN OR OTHER SEED.

FOREIGN WHEAT USED AS SEED HERE.

In reply to some questions I put to him, Mr. Donald McDonald sent me the following particulars about the tanks Messrs. James Carter and Co., of 237, High Holborn, use for exporting seeds of all kinds to all parts of the world.

“DEAR SIR,

“Replying to your inquiry, we will get our artist to take a photograph of a 400-gallon tank to-morrow. In answer to your questions—

“*Is it airtight?* Yes; this is imperative. All our seed tanks are made with an eighteen-inch manhole, into which the head is fitted when filled; it is put in with red lead, and screwed up in such a manner as to exclude the air thoroughly.

“*Average cost to make?* This varies according to the market price of iron. A 400-gallon size measures four feet each way, and, made of best quality iron plates, should weigh about  $4\frac{1}{4}$  cwt. Prices range from 40s. to 70s. each. At present we are paying 47s. 6d.; and it has ruled about this figure for a year or more; this price is for *painted* tanks, and not *galvanized*, which are always more money. The latter are supposed to last much longer, as they stand the action of water to a much greater degree than iron-coated paint.

“I should say well-dried wheat would keep longer in double sacks than in an airtight tank, except under special circumstances. We have had wheat stand this fashion for two or more years; and samples, too, that have had no special drying.

“*How long will a tank last?* This depends upon treatment. I had a galvanized iron one fitted out-of-doors at my house, for holding rain-water; and although it has been up for nine and a half years, beyond looking dirty outside, it seems to be as good as new. I had it made by the same people that do our seed tanks. A painted tank would probably not have so long a life, as rust soon plays havoc with ordinary iron.

“Yours faithfully,

“DONALD McDONALD.

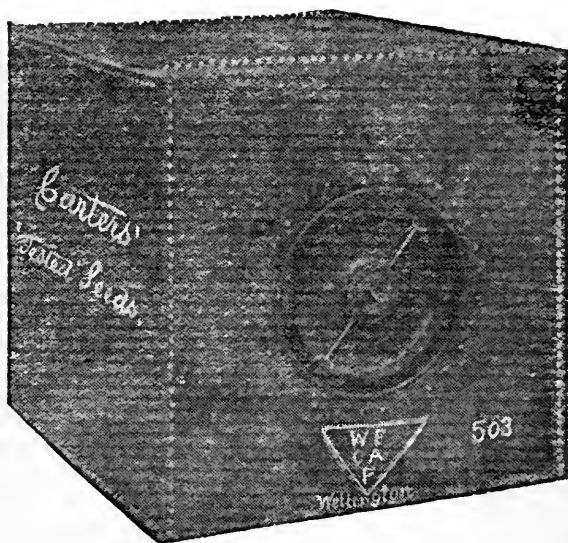
“P.S.—Wheat also gets affected with a weevil when packed out of condition. If thoroughly dry, and the tanks themselves kept dry, it ought to keep sweet for some time—I was going to say like the mummy wheat, but this is a myth.”

"In answer to your other question, as to whether foreign-grown wheat can be used as seed in this country largely—

"There is no doubt, on a pinch, the hard wheat of Southern Russia and the warmer parts of the United States could be reproduced here; but they lose their vigour to such an extent that they would probably only give half a crop here of either straw or grain. The millers like these hard grains because they can be more easily manipulated—make whiter flour and a better-coloured sample; but as to nourishment—well, give me the soft wheaten flour of Britain.

"The grains in an ear of South Russian wheat, grown roughly in the usual way, would probably not average more than twenty to thirty.

"Yours faithfully,  
"D. McDONALD."



400-GALLON SEED TANK.



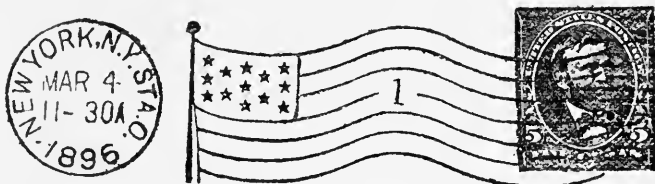
# WHY NOT COPY THE AMERICAN IDEA OF A NATIONAL POSTMARK?

"A SUGGESTION FOR THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL.

(I have reprinted this correspondence, as I believe very strongly in showing our flag. By the way, the slight mistake in the red-ensign in my coloured diagram was not mine, but the printer's.—R. B. M.)

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE *Westminster Gazette*.

"DEAR SIR,—Every day seems to make it more necessary that the bonds between the Colonies and the Mother Country should be strengthened as much as possible. I send you a facsimile of the new American postmark, and venture to say we might copy this capital Yankee notion, and stamp our letters



with the Union Jack. Then every mail would carry the flag all over the world. For instance, I know some English men and women in the Transvaal, in the United States, in South America, etc., who would find the looked-for letters from home all the more welcome when coming literally 'under the British flag.'

"Yours faithfully,

"R. B. MARSTON.

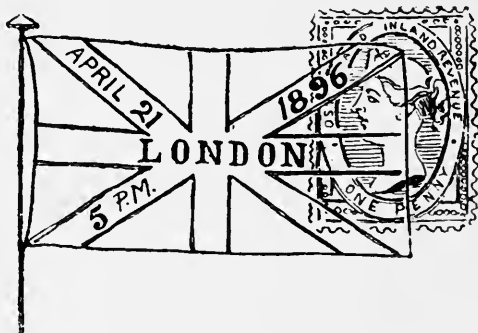
"St. Dunstan's House, Fetter-lane, E.C."

"THE SUGGESTION TO THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL.

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE *Westminster Budget*.

"SIR,—Certainly, to have a black-and-white vision of the Union Jack on your breakfast-table, as set forth in your issue

of April 17, is a happy thought. True, the idea was all very well with the Stars and Stripes of the New World. That banner, as you show, lent itself readily to pictorial design. But, like ourselves, the shape of our Union Jack is more angular. Hence curiosity prompted me to ask Mr. R. B. Marston how he would adapt the mother-country's flag to a decorative postmark. Below is his reply.



"Naturally, the St. Martin-le-Grand folks are averse to new ideas—really, they are bored to death with them. However, the Postmaster-General has seen his *Westminster*, and I learn that he writes to thank Mr. Marston for the suggestion, and will be happy to keep it in view. Is this only a sugar-plum to please the author of the happy thought, or does it mean that the Union Jack will be always at our elbow on our writing-desk, business or otherwise?"

"X."

"National Liberal Club, April 22.

"P.S.—The type is movable, so that it can be changed as often as required."

Mr. A. F. Hills, the Chairman of the Thames Shipbuilding Company (which has just completed the splendid battleship *Fuji* for Japan), is also the President of the Vegetarian Society of Great Britain. I was delighted to find the eminent builder of battleships and cruisers had read my article on "Corn Stores for War Time." In the course of a conversation I had with him, Mr. Hills asked me

if I would write an article on our Food Supply in War Time for the *Vegetarian*, the ably-conducted monthly organ of the society. I am not a vegetarian, but I was glad to accept this further offer of publicity for the suggestion of such a colossal vegetarian reserve as five million tons of wheat would be. I have, with the editor's permission, made use of some parts of my article in the *Vegetarian* in this book.—R. B. M.



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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

THE CONTRIBUTORS.—The present work, in the preparation of which Mr. LAIRD CLOWES is being assisted by Sir CLEMENTS MARKHAM, K.C.B., P.R.G.S.; Captain A. T. MAHAN, U.S.N.; Mr. H. W. WILSON, Author of "Ironclads in Action"; Mr. THEODORE ROOSEVELT, Author of "The Naval War of 1812"; Mr. E. FRASER, and many other competent writers, aims at being a trustworthy and, so far as space allows, a complete history, from the earliest times to the present.

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